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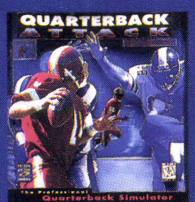
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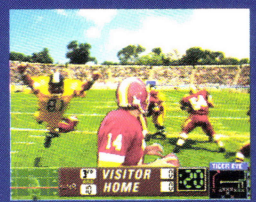
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u r n o t e

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SONY

PlayStation

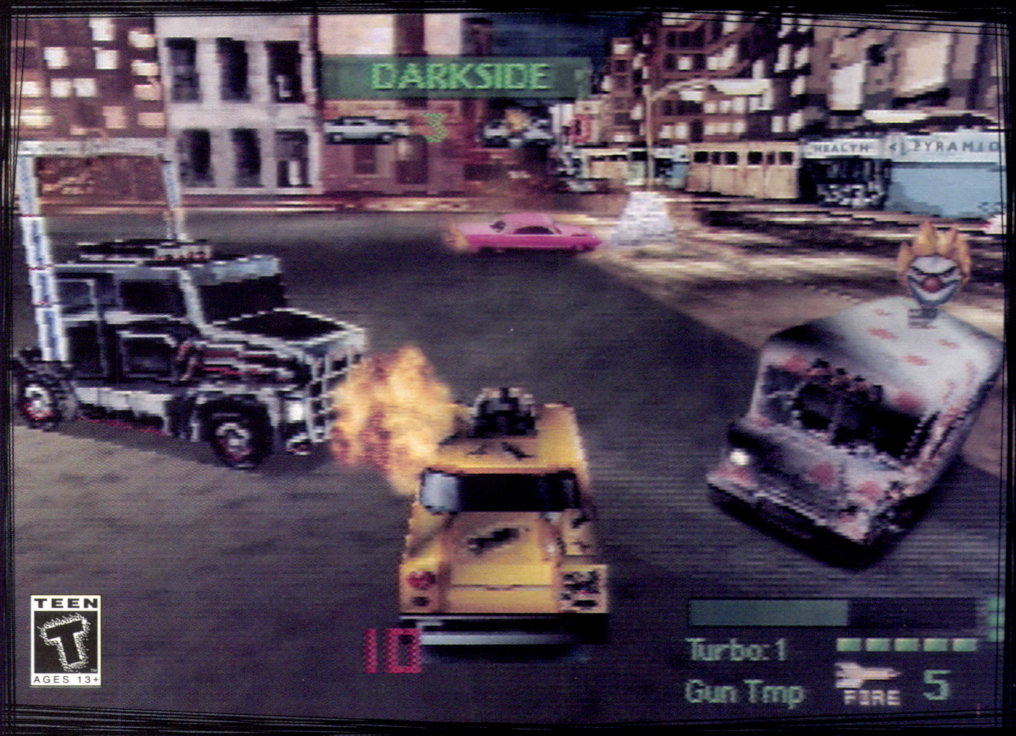
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PlayStation™







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ARICIA LEE

National Advertising Representative
RANDY BROWN
(213) 951-7906
FAX: (213) 651-0528

Advertising Production Director
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Plugged In...

The cost of games is something the industry really ought to be ashamed of. Why? Because even though technology has improved, and prices for electronics in general have come down, the games industry has steadfastly refused to follow suit with the pricing of games. Games cost exactly as much as they ever did and it sucks.

I can go down to my local video store and buy the entire **Star Wars** Trilogy for less than the cost of the average Super NES game. I hate to say this, but the Star Wars Trilogy is a hell of a lot better than any video game. Of course they're two different things. A game is a game and a movie is a movie. Videotape is cheaper to manufacture than a cartridge.

Having said that, a CD is a lot cheaper to make than a VHS cassette, so why are CD games for both PCs and the new game systems so expensive? Surely, now that the games are on a cheaper format, the savings should be passed on to the consumer.

Not according to software companies. Apparently these new machines are a lot more expensive to develop for and so the higher cost of production still affects retail prices. Very nice, but it doesn't help Joe Blow. Ask the man in the street the following question: What would you rather have— cheap playable games, or expensive games that play badly with lots of full-motion video and third-rate actors?

The answer is of course a very obvious one. Now please don't accuse me of being a Luddite. I think full-motion video looks very nice and I do like high production values in my games, but isn't there an argument for cheap games? Sell-through videos are a relatively new phenomenon. The concept is simple. If it's cheap enough, you can make a killing on volumes sold rather than on a big profit margin. And it works. Disney's bank vaults swell every time a feature is released on sell-through. The math is simple. If you halve your profit margin to create a discount for the consumer, more than double your original potential market will buy the product, so you make more money anyway.

But it isn't happening. And it doesn't look like it is going to happen any time soon. Nintendo already has plans to make its Ultra 64 games incredibly expensive. Nice to know that the very cheapest Ultra 64 game will cost at least $60 and probably more.

There's no quick solution. Somebody, somewhere in the industry is going to have to take a big risk, bite the bullet and start dumping cheap software into the market. Of course there will be problems. Loads of crappy games will be released, but the market will fix itself. The cream of the crop will rise to the top and we'll be back where we started—only this time the games will be cheaper.

In an ideal world, of course. Sadly though, the world is far from ideal. As a matter of fact, the world sometimes sucks. But it's only games after all. Who really cares? You do.



INSIDE ULTIMATE

News p010

Big moves and shakes in the industry this month, with Sega shocking everyone with a new price point for the Saturn. Find out what this means to you, to Sony and even to Nintendo in this month's red hot news section. Remember, if you didn't read it here, you didn't read it at all.

Static p032

Yet another chance for we, the magazine, to give you, the people, a chance to air your opinions and views. If you don't like something, write in and tell us about it. If you do like something, we want to hear about that too.

Christmas games Shopping! p018

Jim Loftus presents ULTIMATE GAMER's guide to what's hot and what's not on the shelves this Christmas. Hardware, software and weird things with fur on them.

New frontiers in New Orleans p026

ULTIMATE GAMER visits the world's biggest exposition of arcade games at the AMOA show in New Orleans. Find out what the big arcade companies have in store for next year.

Inside Namco p058

From the company that brought you **Ridge Racer**, **Tekken** and **Pac Man**, just wait until you see what's in store for 1996. ULTIMATE GAMER takes a long, hard look at a company that has singlehandedly defined the standards for 32-bit games.

Spaced Odyssey p098

Far back in the dark mists of time, a company called Magnavox unveiled what it thought would be the future of home entertainment. Before CDi, there was Odyssey, easily the nuttiest game system of all time.

Reviews

I can still remember when ah wuz jist a boy. Back in them days, we didn't have no 32-bit processors and such like. As a matter of fact, back in them days, all we were allowed to play with wuz our imaginations and a small piece of wood. For whittlin' and such like. Of course, we also had a Coleco Vision, but often the small piece of wood was more fun. You kids don't know just how good you got it these days, with your PlayStations and your Saturns. Mind you, that there Jaguar system takes me back a good year or two....

Doom 2
p064

Doom could be the best game ever, the PlayStation version rocks.

Twisted Metal
p068

Life in L.A. just got a little bit more dangerous.

NFL Game Day
p071

The first football game for the Sony PlayStation. Was it worth the wait?

Virtua Racing
p072

Shouldn't this have come out before **Daytona USA**?

Agile Warrior
p074

3-D furious flying combat on the PlayStation. Sounds good....

Mansion of the Hidden Souls
p075

Shades of **Seventh Guest** in this Saturn adventure.

Corpse Killer
p076

Could this be the most disgusting game on Saturn?

Black Fire
p077

The first 3-D helicopter shooter on the Saturn.

Boxer's Road
p078

This'll take a lot longer than the McNeeley fight did.

NBA Jam T.E.
p080

The best basketball game around just got better.

Ghen War
p083

The less said about this little game, the better.

WWF Wrestlemania
p084

Street Fighter meets wrestling, the results are staggering.

Warhawk
p086

Star Wars (well, to all intents and purposes) for the PlayStation.

Lost Eden
p090

Strange goings on in a land that time forgot.

Kolibri
p091

At last, a 32X game that actually looks like a 32-bit game

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PlayStation

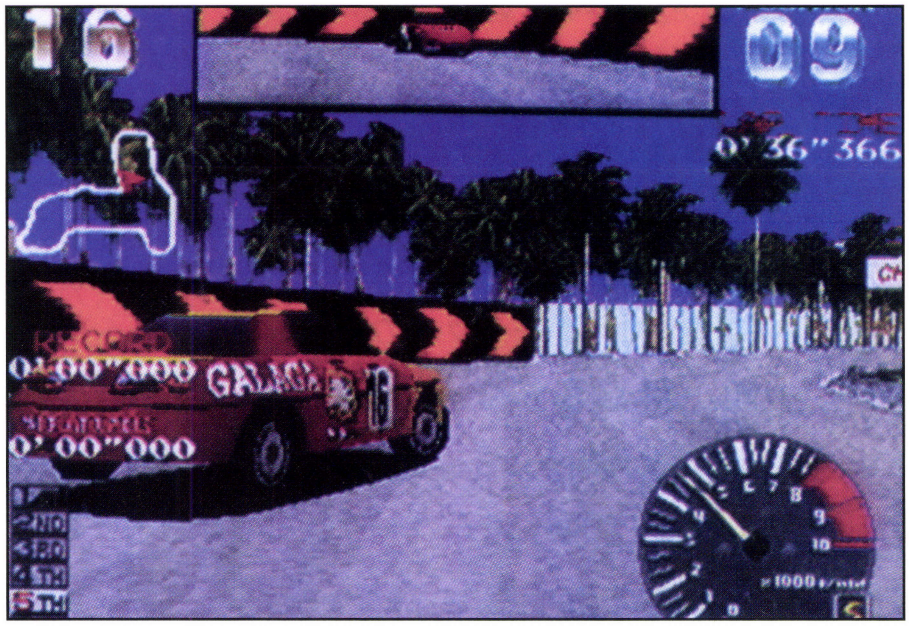
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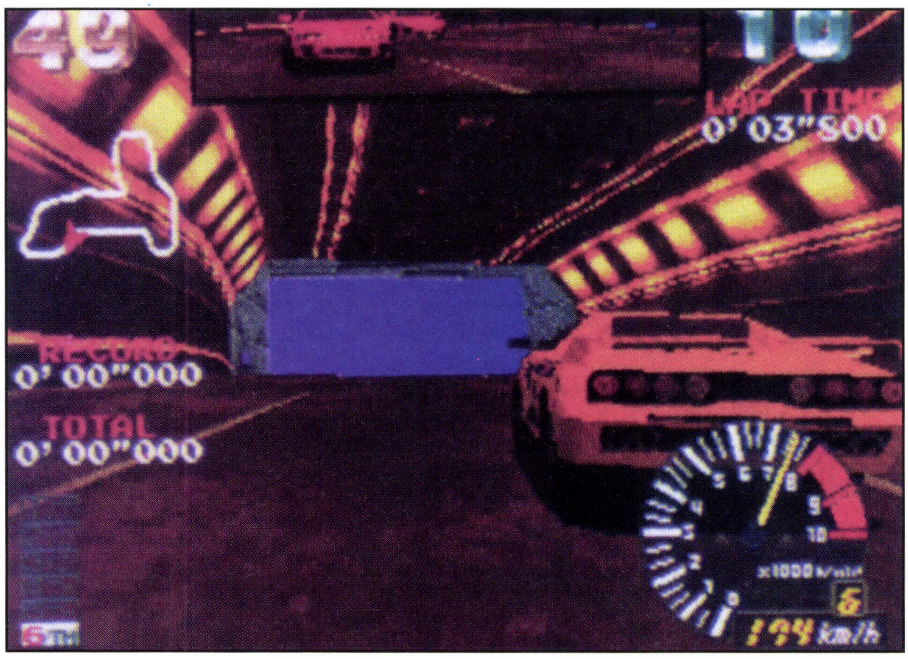
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Incoming

Late-Breaking News & Info

Namco readies Ridge Racer 2 ■ Namco retro gaming compilation ■ Toshinden sequel finished





My, my. RIDGE RACER REVOLUTION is looking mighty tasty. New tracks and cars add up to one hell of a rush. Don't expect to see the game spinning its wheels before Spring, though.

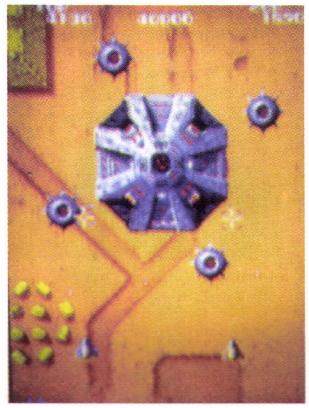
A New Revolution

Namco has finally chosen a name for its **Ridge Racer** PlayStation sequel. **Ridge Racer Revolution** is the game and it looks set to take the Ridge Racer legend to new heights. This is not a sequel in the truest sense, but an enhanced remix of the original. The changes may be small as far as gameplay is concerned, but Ridge Racer fans have been waiting a long time for this game.

So what's new? Well, for one thing there are more tracks. The single biggest criticism levelled at the original game was a lack of tracks. Ridge Racer Revolution gives you three, with variations on each course as well as the mirror and reverse modes found in the original game. There are also new cars, but since there were 13 cars to choose from in the first version, this probably won't be too much of a thrill for the average fan.

The biggest change in gameplay terms is the inclusion of a rearview mirror. This is a feature that was previously only found in the arcade version of **Ridge Racer 2**. The mirror allows you to keep a close eye on overtaking cars, letting you move in front of them and thwart their sneaky antics. This also ties in nicely with the link facility now enabled. Two-player games will be permissible thanks to Sony's built-in communications protocol, something it has taken almost a year to perfect. So basically Ridge Racer Revolution looks to be the single best racing game of all time.

Namco Compiilation



Not content with releasing some of the best new software for the PlayStation, Namco is all set to release some of the best old software. The Namco Collection features a selection of the finest Namco coin-ops from the past. Volume One (the collection will keep coming, presumably until Namco runs out of suitable games) will contain Xevious, one of the first vertically scrolling shoot 'em ups, Mappy, a wacky Pac-Man style game and Galaga, the sequel to Galaxian.

Namco also has plans to release Pole Position, Pac-Man and a bunch of other crusty classics. The list above is subject to change, and we'll hopefully have a final catalog of what's on the first disc by next issue. Until then, you can drool happily in the knowledge that the games you grew up with will be here when you're old.

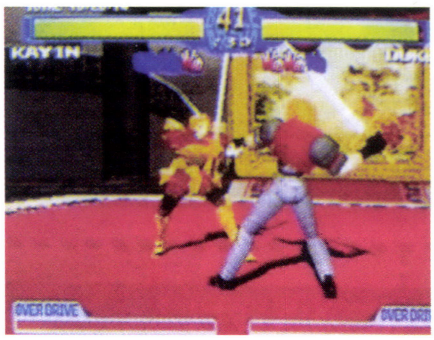
Toshinden 2

Takara's hot fighting game is about to see a sequel in the arcades in the shape of **Toshinden 2**. Apart from the obviously stunning new graphics, there are a couple of other important changes. For one thing, the game will be released by Capcom, not Takara. Quite why this is happening is something of a mystery, since Takara has a perfectly good arcade division. The other surprise is that this is an arcade game since **Toshinden** originally appeared on the PlayStation (although a Saturn conversion is imminent).

Good news for fans of the original game is that the new version will include new characters, new backgrounds and new moves. A whole new combo system has been put in place and each character now has an "overdrive" move for when things get a little desperate. The graphics are sharper and smoother and the control system has been tweaked to make the game simpler to play.



The sequel to Takara's mega-hit game, BATTLE ARENA TOSHINDEN is now complete. This time however, it will hit arcades before it sees life on Sony's 32-bit machine.





ULTIMATE GAMER Contest Winners

■ PlayStation Muscle Contest

Grand Prize:
Eric Reed
Morristown, TN

■ Saturn Goodies

First Prize:
Donald Baker
Grand Junction, CO

Second Prize:
Brian Cooper
Memphis, TN

Lawrence Waters
Manalapan, NJ

Kevin Fogarty
Portland, OR

Third Prize:
Richard Martel
Manchester, NH

Brian Warshaw
Keysville, VA

Russel Riedel
Newhall, CA

Anthony Morgan
Seward, AK

Cynthia Mayer
Pawling, NY

Joe Samarzes
San Mateo, CA

Ed G. Wells
San Francisco, CA

Linda Gertig
Bellevue, NE

Joseph McLaughlin
Long Island City, NY

Daniel Strickland
Alachua, FL

■ Freeo Neo

Grand Prize:
Ramajana Davis
Stamford, CT

NEWS

SEGA FEELS PRESS

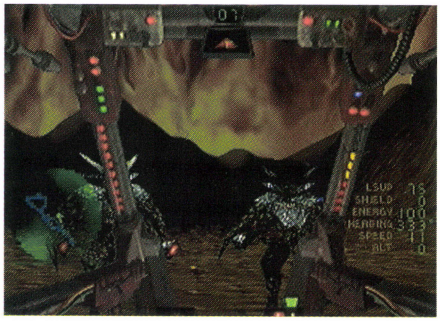
The next generation console war has been among the most bitter struggles this industry has ever seen. The fight has actually escalated since our last issue with the shocking news that Saturn has been reduced in price to $299, exactly the same retail price as the Sony PlayStation, its main rival.

In the past, criticism has been levelled at the Saturn for a lack of processing power. That criticism has, to a certain extent, been addressed by the latest bunch of Saturn releases, with **Virtua Fighter 2** and **Sega Rally** taking up some of the technical slack. The biggest problem with Saturn however, and something that appears to have drastically affected sales to date, was the price point of $399. The PlayStation launched at $100 less and apparently cleaned house. In the first couple of weeks, Sony sold more than 100,000 units, far more than Sega had managed in a period of three months.

This new price point puts both machines on even footing, but the PlayStation has the advantage in terms of software releases. There are simply more games available for the PlayStation than the Saturn, and Sega's claims of exclusivity on their system have been somewhat eclipsed by the release of titles like **Mortal Kombat 3** and **Wipeout** for PlayStation.

Sega's reasons for dropping the price point include a change in the yen-dollar rate (although no such change is actually apparent) and the seeming success of the Saturn platform. Obviously the real reason for this change is to directly compete with the PlayStation. Considering how long each machine has been on sale, Saturn's sales are more than disappointing. Sega has several other concerns to worry about. the Genesis market is fading faster than that of the Super NES, the 32X is still causing problems and the upcoming launch of the Nomad console should keep them busy.

Sony has only one product to con-

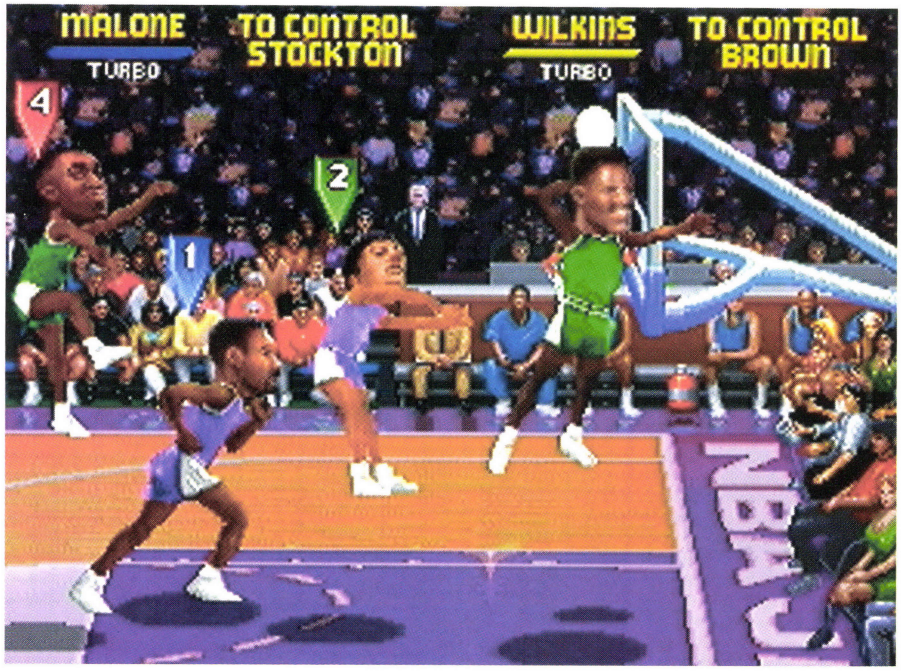


GHEN WAR, from Sega's in-house development team is a little disappointing. Sega's Japanese development is much better.



BLACK FIRE, another Sega in-house development is one of the titles Sega is placing a lot of faith in.

"A change in the yen-dollar rate? Obviously, the real reason for (the price) change is to directly compete with the PlayStation."



NBA JAM for the Saturn is essentially every bit as good as the PlayStation version.

URE; DROPS PRICE



In an attempt to gain lost ground, Sega has lowered the price of its Saturn 32-bit console. Although this is certainly good news for gamers, it remains to be seen what kind of lasting effect this maneuver will have on Sega's plans for world domination.

cern itself with, the PlayStation and so far, it looks like its dedication to that platform is paying off. However, the new $299 price point for Saturn makes things a lot less certain than they were. Sega can play catch up in the period between now and Christmas Day. Only in the new year will a leader actually emerge and by that time, the Nintendo Ultra 64 will be launched. How confusing will all this get?

Very. There are no clear answers, only a string of vague promises from each company. When asked if they would consider a competitive price drop, Sony refused to comment.

Speculators insist that Sony will in fact lower the price, or at least change its current bundle package. Word of mouth however, is as important in this market as it is in the movie industry. If people start to believe the PlayStation is the better console, then the PlayStation will continue to outsell the Saturn. Sega itself saw the benefits of this when its technically less impressive Genesis was outselling the Super NES by a factor of two to one.



Sega has a lot of catching up to do in terms of software releases and overall impact.



Considering Sega's machine has been out for so long, it seems odd that its selection of games was so small.

NAMCO'S ARCADE EXPLOSION

Namco's logical successor to the Tekken series is a game called Soul Edge. They have for the moment abandoned the PlayStation-based System 22 board and instead used the Rave Racer technology to produce this hot new fighting game. The graphics are possibly the best ever seen on a fighting game and the gameplay we hear, is built to match.

Soul Edge features a fighting system very similar to that found in Sega's **Virtua Fighter** series. Three buttons control your punching, kicking and blocking actions and each character comes armed with a weapon, making things that little bit more complicated. In appearance it looks a little like a supercharged version of **Toshinden**, but if reports from our source in Japan are anything to go by, this could be the fighting game of the year. Namco still has a little tweaking to do before this baby ships, but hold onto your quarters, this is going to be hot.

Ahem, Namco seems to have taken a little influence from **Virtua Cop** on this one. **Time Crisis** is a polygon-based shoot 'em up for two players, with a big plastic gun. Okay, so that makes it more than a little similar to Virtua Cop, but who's counting? In its defense, this has better graphics and slightly more involved gameplay than Virtua Cop, but that doesn't make it a better game. What it does do is raise the issue of gun-based shooters for the PlayStation. If Namco decides to convert this for the PlayStation, someone's going to have to bring out a gun for the system. Here's hoping.

In another shameless rip-off of a 3D polygon-based Sega title, the spectacular-looking **Dirt Dash** is set to arrive in Japanese arcades this year. It looks and plays very much like **Sega Rally**, but again features slightly more impressive and realistic graphics than the Sega game. The gameplay is slightly more arcadelike, with the realistic handling of a real rally car being sacrificed in favor of more responsive controls. Music and sound effects blend well with an active-feedback control system, and the overall results are pretty impressive.

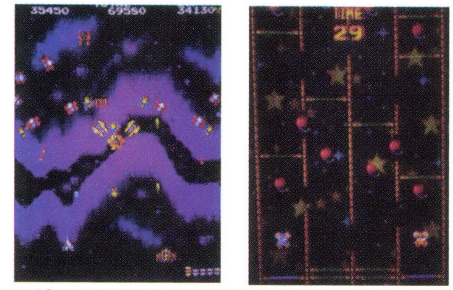
Another shameless rip-off of a Sega title



DIRT DASH IS A PRETTY NICE-LOOKING RACER WITH MORE THAN A HINT OF SEGA RALLY.



THE USE OF WEAPONS MAKES THE ACTION EVEN SCARIER THAN IN TEKKEN.



NAMCO IS PRETTY BUSY WITH A NUMBER OF OTHER PROJECTS, INCLUDING THE NAMCO COLLECTION, A BUNCH OF ITS OLD ARCADE TITLES.





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XUG5C0

JAGUAR CD HITS

Finally, after nearly a year of broken promises, Atari has released its Jaguar CD to the gaming public. At a mere $149, the unit is more than affordable—in fact, it's a downright bargain. The real question is, is this new add-on too little, too late?

On Friday, September 15th, Atari Corporation at long last made its Jaguar CD add-on available for purchase. For Jaguar owners wishing to step up to the CD platform, the wait is over and the rumors are silenced.

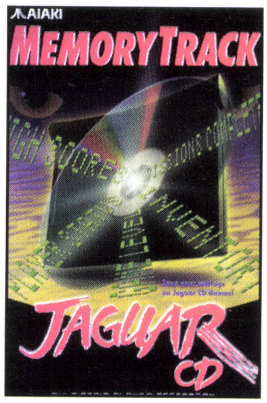
While the official debut of the Jag CD was rather low-key in comparison to that of the widespread madness six days prior (guess who), Atari has managed to squeeze the item into several vital retail chains—Electronics Boutique and sister store, Electronics Boutique XPress—to name but two.

"Sept. 15th was rather low-key in comparison to the widespread madness six days prior."

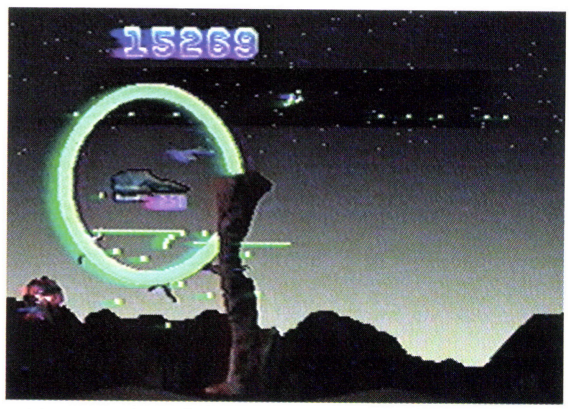


Love it or hate it, there is no contesting the fact that you get a lot for your money with the Jaguar CD. The units built-in VLM provides some truly excellent, tripped-out visuals for music CDs. As far as pack-ins go, there are three: **Blue Lightning**, **Vid Grid** and a **Myst** sampler disc. As an added bonus, you also get the incredible if not brilliant **Tempest 2000** soundtrack CD.

At an extremely low price point of $149, the question for Jaguar owners isn't affordability, but rather sensibility. At launch time, there were no additional Jag CD titles on the shelves. None. Not a smart move. At press time, we did receive one Jaguar CD-related item, though. **MemoryTrack** is a RAM cartridge which lets players store game info—up to 125,000 bytes of it, to be exact. MemoryTrack retails for $29.95. The fear many Jaguar owners have is that Atari will refocus their production of software to the cheaper and more profitable CD format. For those who purchased a Jaguar system at its original sticker price of $249, Atari's new CD add-on would put the total Jaguar/Jaguar CD set-up at a hefty $400. Ouch. Atari's recent advertising campaign has been an attempt to make the consumer feel stupid for thinking about paying over $300 for a 32-bit system—such as a Saturn, for example—when they could get a 64-bit Jaguar for only $149. What they don't tell you is that in order to play CD games, you need to shell out another hundred and fifty bucks. Still, at this point, a Jag/Jag CD purchase adds up to a competitive price.



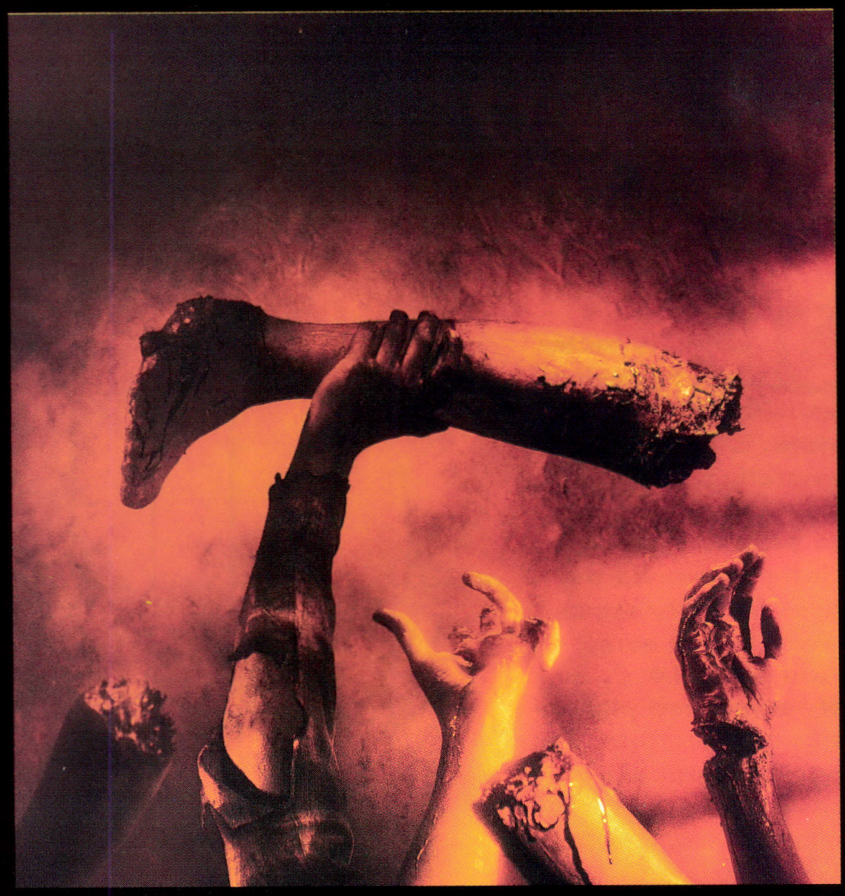
MEMORYTRACK for the Jaguar CD keeps tabs on your gaming progress.



DEFENDER 2000 is one of the flagship titles Atari will release on cartridge initially, although a CD version looks pretty likely.

ALL ZOMBIES IN FAVOR OF BANNING CORPSE KILLER RAISE YOUR, WELL, RAISE WHATEVER YOU GOT LEFT.

Welcome to Cay Noir, a cozy little island infested with enough zombies to film the next 8 sequels to Night of the Rotting Dead. As a Special Forces officer, you must mow your way through a C.I.A. plot gone awry, stopping only to spit, reload and wipe the splattered zombie blood off your boots.



The new Graveyard Edition features gory sounds, tons of shooting targets, full-screen zombies and, yes, lots of blood. Enjoy. You trigger-happy little sicko.







CORPSE KILLER
GRAVEYARD EDITION

AVAILABLE ON WINDOWS 95 AND MS-DOS CD-ROM, SEGA SATURN AND MACINTOSH CD-ROM. SEE YOUR LOCAL RETAILER. http://www.digipix.com 1-800-332-0032

MATURE M AGES 17+

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All I Want for Xmas...

1995 Ultimate Holiday Gaming Guide

Whoever says giving is better than receiving sure as hell isn't a gamer. By nature, we game-players are generally a greedy lot and the need for game-related products only gets more intense around the holidays. With Christmas 1995 only weeks away, there are some 14 actively-supported platforms to choose from. The video-game market is more saturated with product than ever before, and it could easily transform your happy holidays into a gaming nightmare. If you've been driving around town like a homicidal maniac looking for goodies, have no fear—we're here to help you sift through the gaming debris. ULTIMATE GAMER's 1995 Holiday Gaming Guide gives the lowdown on what's hot this holiday season. All prices are street and subject to vary from store to store. If you were a good little gamer this year, maybe fat boy will bring you some presents!



SYSTEMS UNDER $100



☐ **Game Boy**
$49.95 Base Unit

We know, we know: The games are in black-and-white. The sound is crappy. The screen-blur can often make it nearly-impossible to see what's going on. But it's only forty-nine bucks, and the selection of game titles has grown to an astounding number—somewhere in the neighborhood of 300 the last time we checked, and many of them are good, fun games. Plus, the unit comes in many cool colors. We submit to you that the Game Boy is indeed worth every penny. Be a good boy.



☐ **32X**
$99.95 Base Unit • $139.95 w/Star Wars Arcade or Doom

We feel for those who have suffered, we really do. The 32-bit Genesis add-on debuted last Christmas and has since then had more in common with premature ejaculation than an ultimate gaming experience. Sega's Saturn placebo has had its moments, though; **Shadow Squadron** and more recently, **X-Men**, to be exact. Not to sound redundant, but Sega fans, do yourselves a favor: Save your cash for a Saturn.



☐ **Genesis**
$99.95 Base Unit

The longest-running 16-bitter still has some teeth left. With a low price and a library of around 600 games in its arsenal, the Genesis has bang-for-your-buck written all over it. Must-have games like **Madden**, **Streets of Rage**, **Road Rash**, **Revenge of Shinobi**, **Comix Zone**, **Zombies Ate My Neighbors** and **Vectorman** secure this system as one of the greatest ever, and we mean **ever** made. Speed and control are this system's strong suits. Since this is likely to be the last great year for the Genesis, be sure to snap one up. Hey—who spiked the eggnog?!!

☐ **Super NES**
$99.95 Base Unit

Like a fine wine, this remarkable 16-bit console has become more potent with age; **Donkey Kong Country**, **Yoshi's Island**, **Killer Instinct**, **MK3** and **Doom** are all evidence of that. Graphics and sound are specialties of the Super NES, and its game library is extremely well-rounded. One would be hard pressed to come up with a legitimate reason why you shouldn't own one—you just can't go wrong.





☐ **Game Gear**
$99.95 Base Unit • w/Super Columns $109.95 • w/Sports Trivia $119.95 • w/Lion King $129.95 • w/Sonic 2 and Sonic Chaos $139.95

Support for Sega's portable 8-bit game system has been consistently strong and everything plays in honest-to-goodness—BONK!—color (remember those cool TV ads?). These are the areas in which the Game Gear really shines. With the **Lion King** package, the Game Gear unit is blue instead of the usual, dull black! Of course, for around another hundie, you can skip the Game Gear altogether and grab yourself a Genesis-compatible Nomad.

☐ **Sega CD**
$99.95 Base Unit

If you've got a Genesis console and can't quite scrape up the bucks for a next-gen CD game system, all is not lost. Even though it's been in a coma for the last year-and-a-half, the Sega CD peripheral is only a hundred bucks and there's a fairly good-sized library of games ready and waiting. Okay, so it's not 32-bit. Okay, so some of the games—that shit-stinky Marky Mark thing, for one—suck, but there are some good ones in there, and for as little as $9.95! Wheee!



SYSTEMS UNDER $200



Jaguar
$149.95 Base Unit

Boasting an attractive price point and 64-bit power, Atari's Jaguar remains on the prowl. If you're willing to wait longer-than-usual periods of time for fresh, quality titles, this system has its merits. Among the "gotta have it" games: **Alien vs. Predator**, **Tempest 2000**, **Cannon Fodder**, **Power Drive Rally** and **Rayman**. Third-party support—the life-blood of any system—is weak, but with the addition of the Jaguar CD add-on, the possibilities of this system reaching its full potential are somewhat better.

Jaguar CD
$149.95 w/built-in VLM, Blue Lightning, Vid Grid, Myst Sampler and Tempest 2000 Soundtrack

This affordable add-on contains a double-speed drive and 790 megabytes of data storage space. Full-motion capabilities are excellent, even at full screen, and the enhanced audio doesn't hurt, either. The built-in VLM feature provides an acid trip-style light show which even the late Jerry Garcia would've been proud of. CDs cost next to nothing to manufacture, and Atari is hoping to lure Jag owners in with an abundance of software. Loads of pack-ins, but if the games don't flow, there's gonna be trouble.



Virtual Boy
$179.95 w/Mario's Dream Tennis

Although certainly unique in its own little way, we have mixed feelings about Nintendo's Virtual Boy. On one hand, it offers a unique three-dimensional gaming experience. On the other, there's enough "WARNING" paperwork with this thing to fill a small-sized pickup truck (scary). Glowing red visuals combined with dual "in your face" LCD screens don't seem to be the winningest combination these days. In short, the VB gave me a headache. However, if you're a collector of extinct hardware, step right up.



Nomad
$199.95 Base Unit

At long last, the power of Genesis—in the palm of your hand. Nomad's 3 1/4" full-color LCD screen is a big improvement over that of the Game Gear. Screen-blurring has been substantially reduced, if not totally eradicated. The portable unit is completely 16-bit and compatible with practically every Genesis cart ever produced. It's only available in selected areas during the holidays, but come first quarter of '96, the Nomad will go into full distribution. Go for it.



SYSTEMS UNDER $300

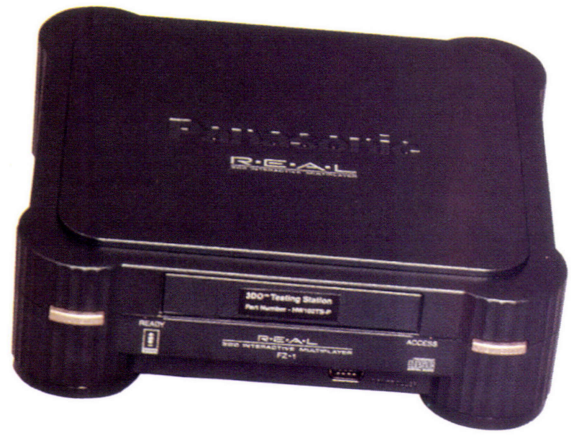
PlayStation
$299.95

Right out of the gate, Sony has delivered the goods. The system is powerful, the price more than fair and the software selection unavoidably attractive. With a full complement of excellent third-party developers involved, the future of the PlayStation looks bright. Santa will undoubtedly be working some overtime this year. Get that fat-ass on the phone—now!



3DO
$249.95 Base Unit

As it stands right now, 3DO is a pretty solid system with a balanced selection of game titles. The price has been lowered to a more obtainable level as well. Fantastic games like **Bladeforce**, **Foes of Ali** and **Captain Quazar** can only be found here. Depending on what happens with the upcoming M2 add-on (the elves are working on it as I write this), 3DO may very well become an even greater force to be reckoned with—as long as good third-parties continue to support it. As far as which model to buy, the Panasonic and Goldstar units are equally fine, but we prefer the Goldstar's controllers.



Saturn
$299.95 Base Unit • $349.95 w/Virtua Fighter Remix

The price drop enacted back in early October has added weight to the legitimacy of a Saturn purchase. Unfortunately for Sega though, this works as somewhat of a double-edged sword: The $299 price is great for luring-in new buyers, but at the same time, it could potentially piss off current Saturn owners who shelled-out three big ones just months ago. The only real hitch to picking up a Saturn is that the hardware is slightly technically inferior to Sony's—sorry, but that's just a plain and simple fact. But it's the games that count, and there are some very, **very** good ones available here: **Virtua Fighter 2**, **Virtua Cop** and **Sega Rally**, to name but a few. In the end, the new price should help Sega regain some lost ground in the system wars.



SYSTEMS UNDER $400

Neo•Geo CD
$399.95

If all you want for Christmas is Pamela Lee, you're probably out of luck. If, however, all you want for Christmas is to kick someone's ass all over the living room, you've come to the right place: The Neo•Geo CD is finally here. SNK knows fighting games (they've made some of the best ones on earth), and if you spend most of your game time brawling, then you'll want to seriously consider purchasing this console. Along with offering practically every original Neo•Geo title on CD, SNK is hard at work developing more good stuff. A double-speed drive delivers the action.



CONTROLLERS

Six-Button Controller
$24.95

It took them long enough, but Atari has finally released their six-button "fighting" controller. Two sets of 3 buttons each line the top right quarter of the controller. The bottom half of the pad is standard Jaguar fare; twelve additional buttons for use with game overlays.





Flight Stick
$39.95

Quality and durability are traits of the Flightstick Pro from CH Products. This 3DO-compatible sick has 3 fire buttons, trigger, throttle and trim controls. We tested this baby out and found it an excellent flightstick for games like **Shockwave**, **Bladeforce** and **Flying** (ugh!) **Nightmares**.

Stunner Light Gun
$49.95

Yes! The mighty Stunner has been yanked from the arcade and placed into your hot little hands for use on the Sega Saturn. The gun comes free with the purchase of **Virtua Cop**, but can be purchased separately. The Stunner's weight is very similar to the coin-op version of the gun, and gives the sensation of true killing power.



Arcade Stick
$49.95

Sometimes those weak, pathetic little pads just don't cut it; fighting games like **VF 2** always seem so much more fun in the arcade—largely because of the "arcade"-style joystick controls. Saturn owners rejoice: The Arcade Stick is here.





Game Gun
$39.95

For use with the 3DO, Game Gun is accurate, with built-in calibration. A necessary item for use with games like **Mad Dog McCree** and **Lethal Enforcers**.



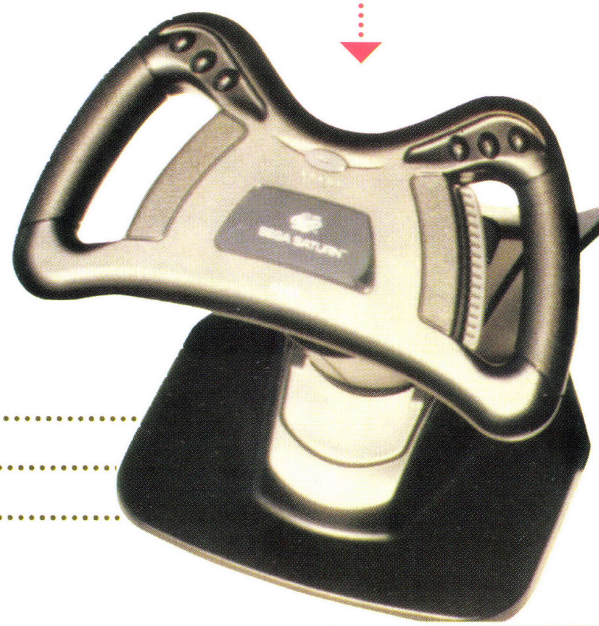
Eclipse Pad
$19.95

Eclipse Pad is for the Saturn and has independent auto-fire and slo-mo along with an LED panel and extra long cord.



Pro Pad
$19.95

What an improvement this pad makes over the standard pad. A must-buy for 3DO owners. Say goodbye to sore thumbs!

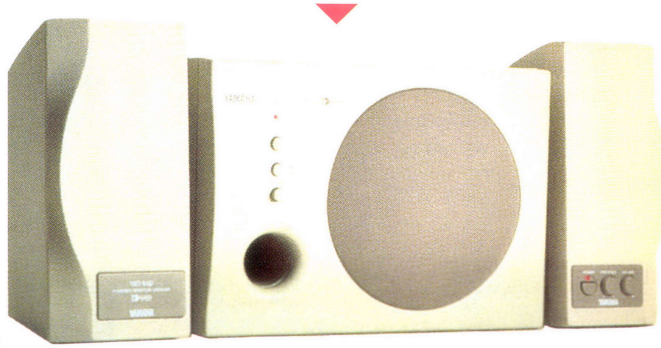


Steering Wheel
$59.95

Racing games like **Daytona U.S.A.** and **High Velocity** are made that much better when you're using the Saturn steering wheel. It's also good for flight sim/action games like **Wing Arms**. If you can get used to the slightly odd calibration, you'll dig this add-on.

ACCESSORIES

Yamaha Speaker System $249.95



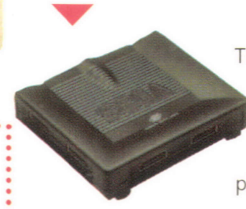
Yamaha provides self-powered audio dynamite for computers and game systems the likes of which will knock you out. Their YST-SS1010 speaker set is absolutely unbelievable—capable of incredible room-shaking, ribcage-thumping bass via its 10" subwoofer. The highs from the twin satellites are clean and sharp, too. Highly recommended.

Team Tap $29.95



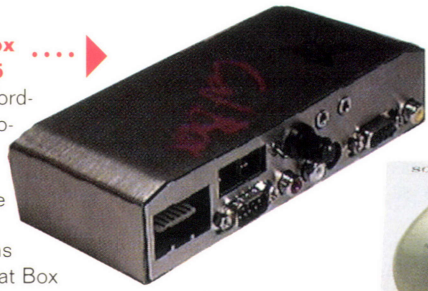
Multi-player games are now possible with the Team Tap from Atari. Each Team Tap provides four controller inputs.

Multi-Player Adapter $29.95



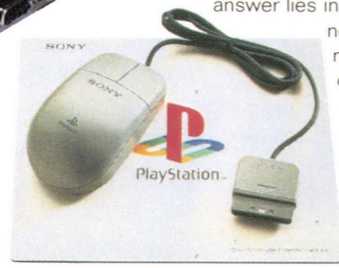
This adapter for the Saturn has six controller inputs. That means entire 12-player competitions are now possible.

Cat Box $69.95



A practical, affordable add-on providing multiple A/V outputs, two headphone jacks and communications support, the Cat Box kicks heinie. Use it in conjunction with your Jaguar to do all sorts of fun stuff (like play **Deathmatch Doom**, for one).

PlayStation Mouse $29.95



Do you dig menu-driven games like Discworld and A-Train? Don't like using your standard controller? The answer lies in Sony's new mouse. It comes complete with pad included.

X-Band $29.95



Networkable games aren't just for high-priced computers anymore. If you own a Super NES or Genesis, X-Band gives you the power to play games over standard phone lines, and at this price, it's a bargain, too.

Game Boy Carry Case $16.95



Trouble with Game Boy clutter? Keep everything neat and tidy with this...er, attractive-looking case. It holds one unit, cables and game carts. Joy!

Virtual i-O Headset $599.95 Standard $799.95 PC w/motion-tracking



The standard strap-on headset gives you full-color, twin-LCD screens which make game playing a whole new experience. The deluxe model adds a PC interface and motion-tracking capabilities—perfect for VR stuff. Picture quality is very good on both units. Go get one.

Leather Recliner $299.95



Every gamer knows how sore one can get from over-extended gameplay. I mean, it's not like I myself have played, um...**Ridge Racer** for 12 straight hours or anything, cuz' only a loser would do that, um... but a nice comfy chair wouldn't hurt. This luxurious leather recliner is built on a rather sturdy tubular steel frame. Lay back, prop your achin' tookies on the footstool, and go nuts for days!

Sony 32" Television $3,250.95



Thanks to new XBR^2 technology and 800 line resolution, this 32" set has the sharpest picture we have ever, **ever** seen. If you're in search of the highest quality large-size Cathode-Ray tube set, this is the ticket.

STOCKING STUFFERS

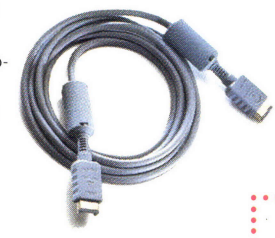
☐ **Game Music CDs**
$9.95 and up

In Japan, video game soundtrack CDs sell almost as well as regular music CDs. Fortunately for American gamer's, this phenomenon is catching on in the good ol' U.S.A.



☐ **Link-Up Cable**
$14.95

A necessary purchase for all PlayStation owners, this cable joins two systems together to allow for two-player games to be viewed on separate TVs or monitors.





☐ **Killer Instinct Strategy Manual**
$9.95

An excellent strategy guide necessary for pulling off those 42-hit ultra-combos.



☐ **Memory Cards**
$19.95

Since the PlayStation has no backup RAM allocation, you need these. Each card stores 15 "blocks" of data.

☐ **Earthworm Jim Action Figures**
$4.95 ea.

Playmates has outdone itself with this line of **EWJ** figures. Almost all of the characters from the animated show are in the lineup and each one comes with his/hers/its own sidekick (ie, Bob and #4). Yes, cool indeed.



☐ **Game Genie**
$14.95-$29.95

You'll catch hell if you cheat on the wife, but a video game? That's a whole different story. If you've been throwing your controller against the wall because the game you're playing is overly difficult, Game Genie by Galoob gives you the edge you've been looking for. Special codes allow for infinite lives, invincibility, and so forth. Available for Game Boy, Game Gear, Genesis, NES and Super NES. (Super NES version pictured).





☐ **Saturn Backup RAM Cart**
$59.95

Good for storing large amounts of game data. Saturn owners should not be without one.



☐ **ULTIMATE GAMER Magazine**
$5.99 ea. • $19.95 1 year subscription

"What a grrr-eat idea!" (spoken in the tone of **Ridge Racer**'s announcer) Hey, ya can't blame us for a cheap, shameless plug! "You're crrr-azy!"

TOP 5 MOST WANTED GAMES FOR ALL SYSTEMS

ULTIMATE GAMER knows full well that games don't come cheap, so we've compiled the following wish-list to help steer you in the right direction.

Saturn
5 Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain
4 Sega Rally
3 Mortal Kombat 2
2 Virtua Cop
1 Virtua Fighter 2

PlayStation
5 Warhawk
4 Destruction Derby
3 Twisted Metal
2 Mortal Kombat 3
1 Tekken

3DO
5 PO'ed
4 Primal Rage
3 Mortal Kombat 2
2 Doom
1 Bladeforce

Jaguar/Jaguar CD
5 Power Drive Rally (cart)
4 Breakout 2000 (cart)
3 Blue Lightning (CD)
2 Primal Rage (CD)
1 Defender 2000 (cart)

Neo•Geo CD
5 Savage Reign
4 King of Fighters '95
3 Pulstar
2 World Heroes Perfect
1 Samurai Shodown II

PC CD-ROM
5 Mech Warrior 2
4 Command and Conquer
3 Magic Carpet 2
2 Mortal Kombat 3
1 Quake

32X
5 Kolibri
4 Starfleet Academy
3 Primal Rage
2 T-Mek
1 Virtua Fighter

Super NES
5 Earthbound
4 Doom
3 Killer Instinct
2 Donkey Kong Country 2
1 Yoshi's Island

Genesis
5 Garfield: Caught in the Act
4 Mortal Kombat 3
3 Earthworm Jim 2
2 X-Perts
1 Vector Man

second-guessing refs and snarfing down pretzels is nothin'.

try making 300 critical calls in under 20 seconds each while answering to a side of beef.





If you're an indecisive twit, move on. NFL Instant Replay's the real thing. Over 300 full-motion video NFL plays on PC CD-ROM, narrated by Pat Summerall. But it's not enough to be right. You've got to be fast. Pitted against the clock or a buddy, choose the right answer and move through the regular season, playoffs and into the Super Bowl round. Dispute a ruling? Consult the complete NFL rule book that's included in hypertext form. But why? You're a walking rule book, right?

INSTANT REPLAY

PHILIPS

SUPER BOWL XXX SWEEPSTAKES

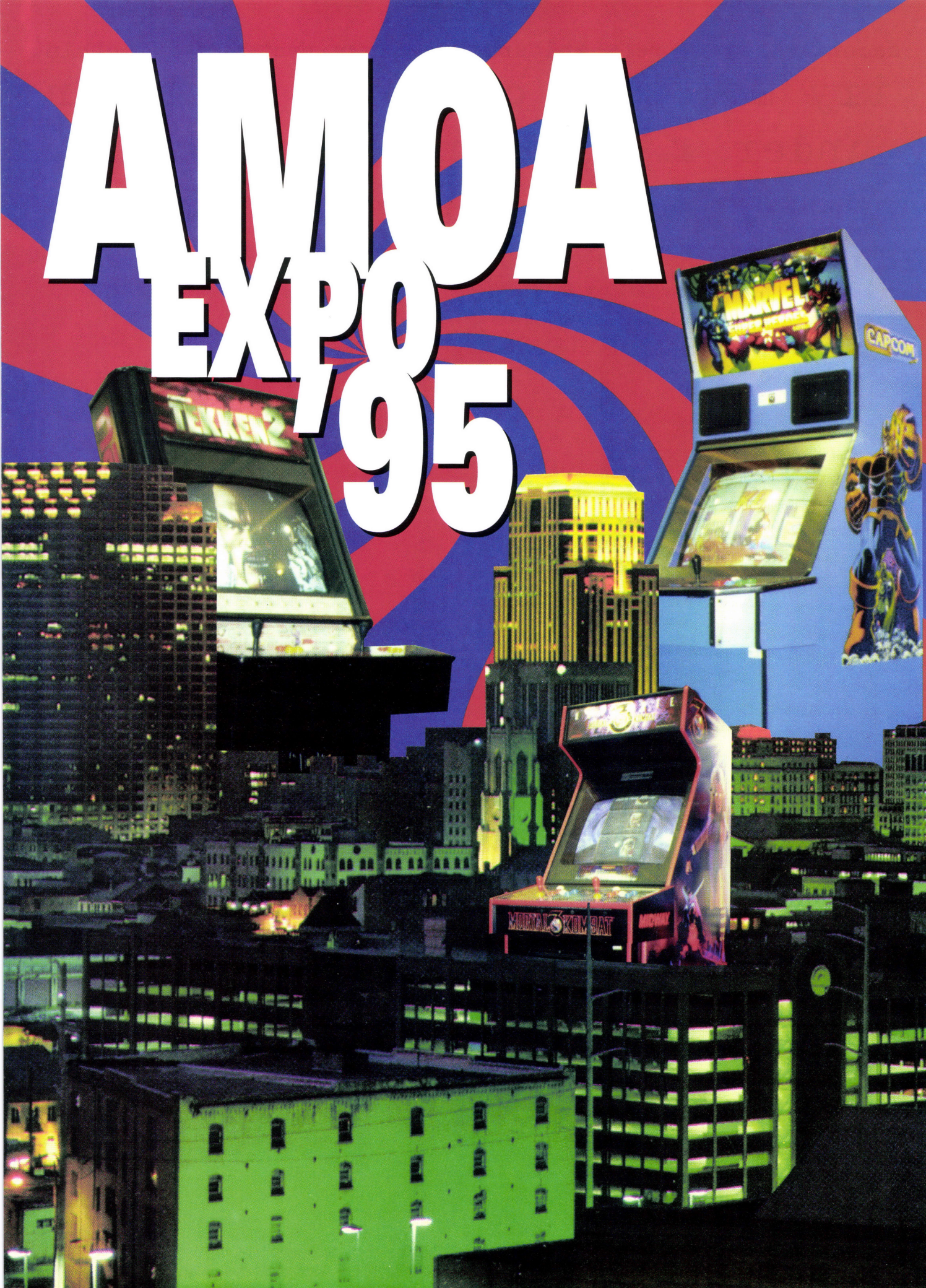
TRY THIS ONE:

A Redskin punt touches a 49er blocker downfield. A Redskin picks up the ball and runs into the end zone. What's the call? The right answer could land you and a friend in Arizona next January for Super Bowl XXX.

- Redskins' ball; at spot of recovery
- Redskins' ball; after 5 yd. penalty from spot of recovery
- TD Redskins
- 49ers' ball; at spot of recovery

Hint: The correct answer is printed on the NFL Instant Replay packages found at your local software retailer.

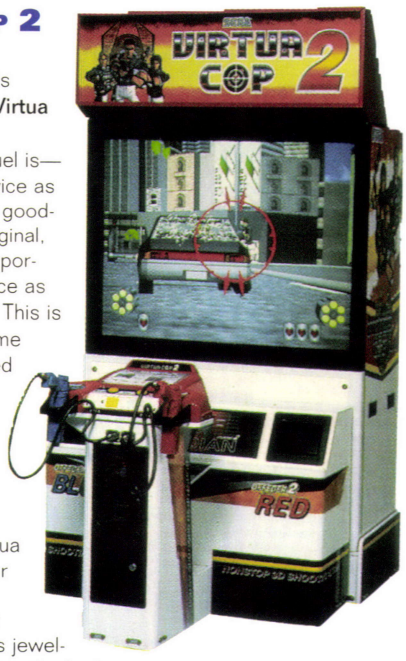
No purchase necessary. Sweepstakes ends 12/31/95. Call 1-800-340-7888 for entry details.


AMOA
EXPO
95
TEKKEN 2
MARVEL
CAPCOM
MORTAL KOMBAT

New Orleans was the place to be on September 21st through the 23rd. Besides the fact that the city never sleeps and the bars never close, there were games. Lots of games. The 1995 AMOA Expo featured an ocean of arcade action and all the big boys were there: Sega, Capcom, Namco, Midway and Konami. A typical nine-to-five day consisted of tracking down info and test-driving all the best new coin-ops. After hitting the hotel for a brief recharge period at 6:00 PM, it was off to the arcades and nightclubs. It was a tough job, but someone had to do it!

Sega

Virtua Cop 2



Sega has taken its already amazing **Virtua Cop** to the next plateau. The sequel is—appropriately—twice as fast and twice as good-looking as the original, but even more importantly, VC2 is twice as much fun to play. This is largely due to some intense high-speed pursuit segments that, frankly, blew our minds. In the first of three new missions, you hop your Virtua Cop butt into your squad car in an attempt to thwart the "EVL" scum's jewel-heist. While chasing the bad guys, the pavement blazes toward you as you blast away, shooting out their windshields and picking 'em off as they hang out of the windows. The sheer number of criminals and the pace at which they attack has been cranked up significantly in VC2, and it makes for one hell of a thrill-ride. Graphics are running at double the frame rate; Model 2 technology and 60 fps translates into smooth-if-not-smoother-than-VF2 visuals. Background environments are subject to even greater amounts of damage this time around, too; entire storefront plate-glass windows can be shattered into oblivion. Stunning.





Indy 500

While familiar games like **Daytona USA** and **Virtua Racing** have, in the past, supplied gamers with quickie bursts of action, **Indy 500**'s strength lies in its realistic, **NASCAR**-like racing approach. Three courses are provided. Indianapolis Motor Speedway is a circular beginner's track that's perfect for practicing handling skills. Highland Raceway, an intermediate course, is set in a mountainous environment and adds lots of twists and turns in the process. Bayside Street is the final selection and the most difficult of the three. The first thing we noticed was the fluidity of the game's graphics—liquid-smooth. Opposing cars scale toward you and away from you at an almost undiscernable frame-rate and the road whizzes along in a manner that's... well, scary. Indy 500 really makes you feel like you're on the racing circuit. Some racing fans may still prefer the slam-bam, thank-you-ma'am style of games like Daytona USA and Ridge Racer, but for a true racing simulation, look no further than Indy 500.



Fighting Vipers



Sega's latest **Virtua Fighter**-esque polygon entry just kind of came out of nowhere. This game was not done on the Titan architecture, but rather on the technically inferior STV board—and it shows. Characters battle it out in an enclosed arena (which reminded us of the octagon seen in UFC tournaments). **Fighting Vipers** comes across pretty much as advertised: A polygon fighting game, with some cool moves thrown in for good measure. In short, it's okay, but not all that original. At this stage of the game, isn't it time to move on?

Virtua Striker

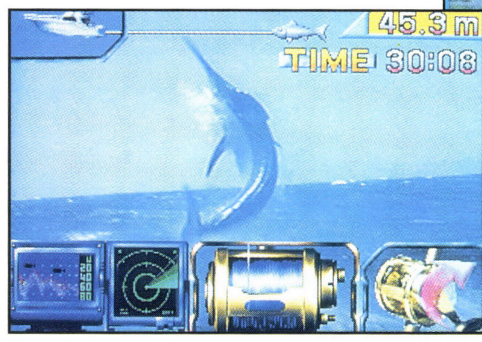
The three-dimensional polygon players in this coin-op are some of the best ever seen. **Virtua Striker** is Sega's debut soccer game, with hyper-fast speed and killer play control. The 50" projection screen has exceptional footLamberts, resulting in an always-bright, always-vivid picture. The game itself offers multi-player action, so whether you're solo or with a group of friends, Virtua Striker's got you covered. Sega has managed to land the official NSL license for this game, so you can rest assured that the players and teams are the real deal.





Sport Fishing

A bizarre hybrid of FMV and...well, sport fishing. The cabinet has a genuine, honest-to-goodness fishing pole attached to its front and the player uses it to reel in his catch of the day. Visit the Caribbean or the Pacific Ocean in search of the "Big One" in a fierce competition against other sportsmen. Bait selection and fishing locations are big factors necessary for victory. The only initial drawback to **Sport Fishing** is its primary use of Full-Motion Video; it's just boring-looking. If you can get past that aspect of the game and happen to be a fishing fanatic, chances are you'll enjoy it regardless.

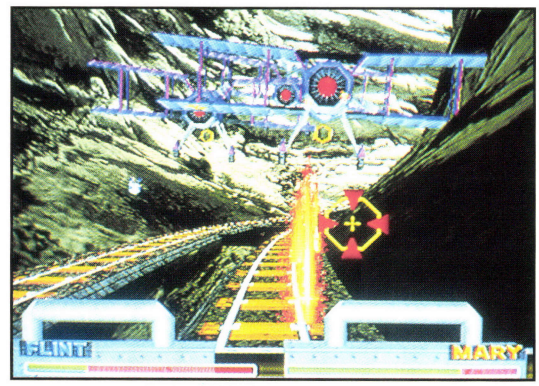




Rail Chase 2



A rather fitting name considering the game is literally and figuratively—on rails. This **Indiana Jones**-style shooting/adventure game has you (and a friend, if you like) blasting away at sinister, nazi-like goons while cruising along in a mine cart. 3-D, polygon-filled graphics, similar to the ones found in the **Virtua Cop** series, look impressive and the levels themselves are laid out to induce acrophobia in even the most hardcore. The **Rail Chase 2** machine itself is pretty cool in that it features a three-axis hydraulic mechanism under its seat. The motions of the seat, in conjunction with onscreen direction, give the player the sensation of movement. And even though the game probably won't appeal to the masses, Rail Chase 2 is certainly a worthy attempt at originality.





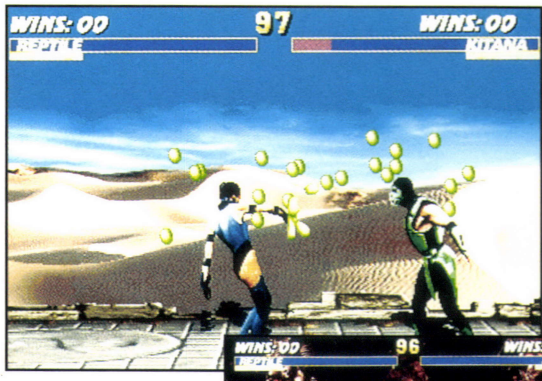




Midway

Open Ice

Best described as **"NHL Jam"**, this new coin-op has action written all over it. Two-on-two competition is accompanied by "on fire" specials. Even the player-select screen is stylized like **NBA Jam**. Violent, fast and furious fun!









Ultimate Mortal Kombat 3

The definitive **MK3** tune-up has arrived. **Ultimate MK3** pretty much says it all and then some, with a total of 16 characters, four new backdrops, new moves and a multi-player tournament mode. Four Mortal Kombat characters have been resurrected for this, the final MK3 coin-op: Kitana, Jade, Scorpion and Reptile. Each of the four additional fighters have sets of standard and special moves unto themselves, along with fatalities, babalities, animalities and friendships. Whew!



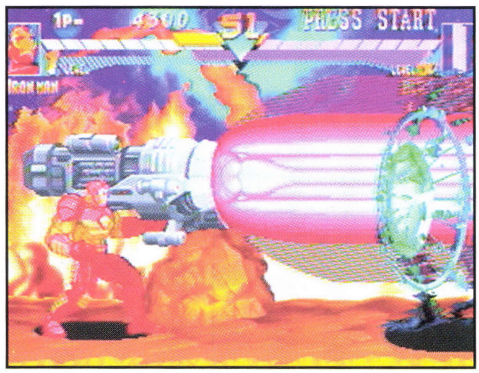
Capcom

Marvel Super Heroes



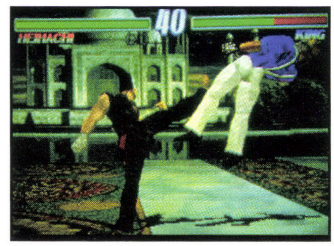


Marvel Comics characters have had a notorious reputation for being treated like shit. Whether it's television, movies or videogames, rarely has there been justice done to the awesome superiority of the Marvel Universe. That has now ended. Expecting the worst, we were joyously blown clean away after playing Capcom's **Marvel Super Heroes** fighting game. A great cast of characters—each with their own unique powers—along with incredible, addictive play-mechanics—make this game of the show. Spider-Man, Captain America, Hulk, Iron Man, Blackheart and Juggernaut are among the ten initially-selectable fighters, and Doctor Doom and Thanos represent final boss characters. There are lots of power-ups in Marvel Super Heroes, one of which is something called "Reality Bend". Once the proper power capsules are attained, Reality Bend gives a character chaotic powers which severely damage the other fighter. The existence of secret, hidden characters has been confirmed by Capcom and we here at **Ultimate Gamer** can only hope and pray that Daredevil, Thor, The Thing and Ultron are all in there somewhere.





Tekken 2



The sequel to the hit polygon fighter **Tekken** may not represent the sort of quantum leap advances made by, say, **Virtua Fighter 2**, but it's improved nonetheless. The all-new backdrops look dynamite and the new characters and bosses are pretty cool, but what's really innovative about T2 is Namco's highly original "Character Time Release" mechanism. Approximately one month after the machine is installed into the arcade, the game will begin to spit-out new selectable sub-boss characters at the rate of one per week for ten weeks. In the end, Tekken 2 will feature some 25 characters in its selection screen. Obviously, this translates into massive, long-term appeal for the game. We dig that highly.





Namco



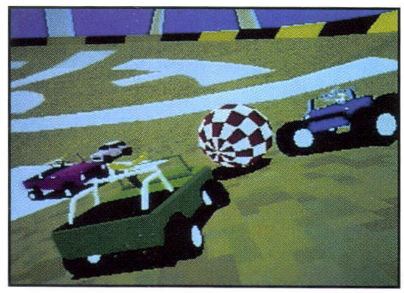


Rave Racer

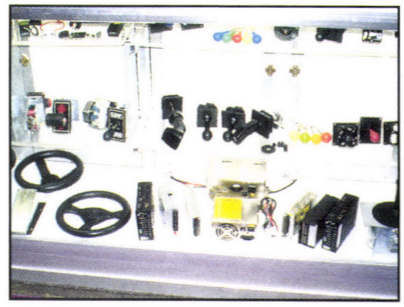
The third installment of Namco's ultra-successful race car series is awesome, to say the least. The game's frame-rate is superb (60 fps) and it takes about two seconds to be convinced that this is the best race car game ever made on this or any other planet. Blazing speed and plenty of mile-high jumps turn **Rave Racer** into a sure-fire winner.



Virtuality had its standup series 2000 arcade systems up and running...sort of. Actually, they had some problems getting one of their systems to work when I was there, so I wasn't able to test-drive **Dactyl Nightmare 2: Race for the Eggs**. I was, however, able to play **Shoot for Loot**, **Zone Hunter** and **Buggy Ball**, which were okay at best. The series 2000 systems essentially operate on a 486 DX with twin Motorola 88/110 RISC chips running at 100 MIPS. Impressive as all that may sound, the system needs work; the visuals are somewhat sluggish and the game concepts fairly bland. Virtuality could be on the right track, though.

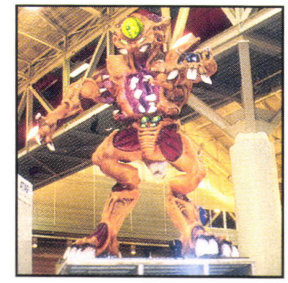


Buggy Ball



Wico, the company long-associated with quality, durable game-control products, was at the show and had many products on display, but what really wowed us was their revolutionary, patented Optic Switching technology. The average arcade stick operates on a leaf-switch system, but not the Wico 360: Since it has no moving parts, it basically lasts a lifetime.





This is Jim after an all-night drink-fest on Bourbon Street. No, actually, this horribly-deformed thing is an alien from Time Warner/Atari Games' new coin-op, **Area 51**. A blatant "**Virtua Cop** wannabe-but-never-will-be" is the best way to describe this game. We would show you a screenshot, but the game is about as much fun to look at as watching someone hang wallpaper, and we'd rather make better use of magazine space for important stuff like sexy game girls!



Speaking of sexy game girls, we snapped this picture of Kitana posing near one of the booths. Coincidence? We think not.

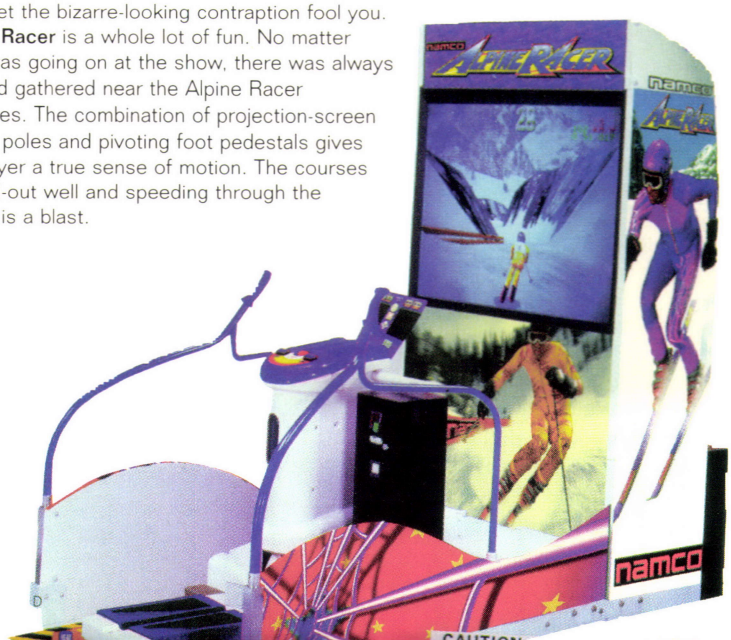


The Sega booth was really smokin'—mainly due to fantastic new games like **Indy 500**.



Alpine Racer

Don't let the bizarre-looking contraption fool you. **Alpine Racer** is a whole lot of fun. No matter what was going on at the show, there was always a crowd gathered near the Alpine Racer machines. The combination of projection-screen TV, ski poles and pivoting foot pedestals gives the player a true sense of motion. The courses are laid-out well and speeding through the slopes is a blast.



What We Didn't See

Sources have indicated to us that Capcom weren't the only ones with a Marvel Comics fighting game. Apparently, one company decided not to unveil its version of the game; a—get this—3D Marvel Comics fighting game! Throughout the show, we tracked down pieces of information regarding this subject, and by the third and final day, evidence was pointing to none other than Sega. It seems that Capcom's awesome fighter may have intimidated Sega, hence the no-show. Speaking of Capcom, there was no sign of the third installment of **Street Fighter**, although we were told in a roundabout way that number three is definitely on its way. **Virtua Fighter 3** (or **3D**) was nowhere to be seen. A Sega rep assured us that, not only has it been under way for months, it's practically finished! This same rep then went on to describe how the differences between VF2 and VF3 are even more astounding than the differences between the first and second games. Wow! Considering that the first game was such a huge success, we were expecting to see a **Primal Rage** sequel as well. Inside sources tell Ultimate Gamer that a second Primal Rage coin-op is in the development stages, but that we shouldn't expect anything before Spring. And as long as we're on the topic of fighting games, we might as well point out that there was no sight of **Killer Instinct 2**, either, but you can bet your ass Midway is working on it.

STATIC

Reach out and touch someone...

OK, so we get our say all the time, but we want to know what you guys are thinking. Opinions, objections, questions and answers. Send us your letters and the star letter each month wins the game of your choice on any system.

Static, Ultimate Gamer, 8484 Wilshire Blvd. Suite 350
Beverly Hills, CA 90211



A **KI** sequel should make its way onto the Ultra next Spring; possibly released in conjunction with the new coin-op.

DOES THE ULTRA DELIVER?

Dear Ultimate Gamer,
Congratulations on such a good magazine. The September issue was my first and I subscribed right away. The question I have for you is, what's the deal with Nintendo? We already have one machine that's cartridge-based and 64-bit, and the system and games are sorry! Am I supposed to believe that Nintendo can produce a sound chip that could compare to a CD? Or that they've developed "new storage compression technology" that would be any better than the storage capability or capacity of a CD? No Way! I don't buy it (and I probably won't). I think what Nintendo fans are going to do is wait... (what will seem like forever) just to finally own another Atari Jaguar—otherwise known as the Ultra 64.

Jim (The Pizza man) D'Piazza
New Port Richey, FL

Dear Ultimate Gamer,
I'm a big fan of the Ultra 64 and I was wondering if it was going to come out in April '96. There was a rumor that it was coming out in July '96. Do you have any idea how much the system is going to cost and what the controllers will look like (pictures please, if you have them)? Additionally, how much will games like **Killer Instinct** and **Crusin' USA** cost?

Marcos Marinoni
Downsview, Ont.

News on the Ultra remains scarce, but we'll do our best to clarify. It's understandable that you're a bit skeptical, Pizza Man, but comparing the abilities of Nintendo's latest effort to the Jag is not at all fair. While both systems are indeed cart-based, the Ultra will truly possess monstrous, 64-bit power. Remember that 3DO, PlayStation and Saturn are all 32-bit consoles, but that doesn't mean they all deliver the same results. The processing architecture of each game system largely dictates what it's capable of. "Sorry" Ultra games? We don't think so. Nintendo has a huge library of well-known titles like, um... uh... oh, yeah—that little game called **Mario**. As far as Ultra's cartridge-based sound and compression techniques go, we doubt that the third most profitable company in all of Japan would decide on a format that wasn't going to work. Marcos, we've been told by Nintendo itself that in November, the Shoshinkai event (held yearly in Japan) will herald the official debut of the Ultra 64. Not only that, but there will be one hundred kiosks set up on the showroom floor and ten finished—FINISHED—Ultra titles. The game cartridges are going to be costly, though, there's no two ways about it. Be prepared to pay close to 100 bucks a cart. It seems like an outrageous price to pay for a video game but then again, it may be worth every penny and then some! As for the controllers, ask and ye shall receive!

UP WITH SATURN

Dear Ultimate Gamer,
I'm a proud Saturn owner. I think that it's a much better system than the Sony Playstation. For one thing, Sega will always be a true champion in RPG and in sports games! Second of all, Sega has much more experience in the video



Sega is bringing **Riglord Saga** to the U.S. Saturn. The RPG's new name is **Mystaria: The Realms of Lore.**

game industry and technology. I mean, Sony will say anything about its system to make you buy it. It just pays magazines to say how good its product is. Honestly, Sony's not going to last very long. Remember when we first heard about the Atari Jaguar; we all thought that was going to be the best and that it was going to last a long time. Boy! I feel sorry for Jaguar owners! So before you plan to buy a Sony PlayStation, think and ask yourself which companies have lasted and stayed the healthiest. Sony is always trying to have everything, but now it's going to go up against the big boys, such as Sega and Nintendo. Good luck! Since the Saturn has three 32-bit risc processors that means it's about 80 to 90 Mhz, because they all run simultaneously, right? Well people, it wouldn't hurt to spend the extra $100 bucks to buy a Saturn rather than a PlayStation! Because as far as I'm concerned, Saturn kicks ass!

Joel Leang
Chicago, IL

Joel, the bottom line is this: A game system's worth is directly related to its software. While there are loads of cross-over games available for both the Saturn and PlayStation (**Street Fighter The Movie**, **NBA Jam TE**, etc), each one offers titles exclusive to its console. Sony has **Tekken** and

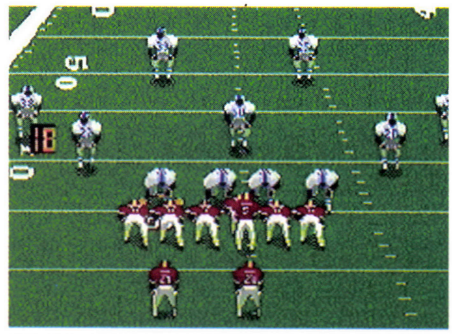
Sega has **Virtua Fighter**. Yes, Sega has years of experience in the industry, and that's important, but don't forget that Sony has been actively pursuing the market since its dealings with Nintendo back in '88. The Super NES CD add-on which the two companies collaborated on never materialized, but Sony refused to give up. The company's done its homework—and it shows.

SHAME, SHAME

Dear Ultimate Gamer,
You guys are doing a bang-up job. It's nice to know there's a magazine not catering to the little kiddies. With the language you guys use, and the commentary (ie. "Games With Guns" and "Ultimate Taboo" issue 2), I'm surprised those sticklers and parent organizations aren't on you like flies on shit. I love it. You guys report it like it is, each game's strengths along with its weaknesses, without cutesy pictures. I was wondering if they have any adult games for home-video game systems? I'm debating whether to get the infamous U-64, PlayStation, Saturn or the Jag. What's your opinion? Does EA Sports have anything planned for football this year? How about the competition? You guys are really great. It looks like I will be a subscriber. Keep up the good work.

F. Siggel
Buffalo, NY

Thanks for the accolades. There are a number of adult games available for systems like Saturn and 3DO. You just have



Madden '96 should satisfy PlayStation sports nuts. This version is everything the 3DO version was hoped to be and more.

to look a little bit (pardon the expression) harder. When deciding on which system to purchase, our stance has always been this: Take a good long look at the game libraries of each console. The system which offers the stuff that turns you on the most is your best bet. EA has put the finishing touches on **Madden '96** (it looks white-hot) and 32-bit sports competition will, for the most part, come in two forms. Interplay has its VR Sports lineup and Crystal D has its own Championship Sports label.

BLOWN AWAY

Dear Ultimate Gamer,
At 6:30 AM on September 9th, I took my place in line at my local game store to pick up my shiny new PlayStation and six games. Imagine how blown away I was when I got home and discovered how cool the pack-in demo disc was! Twelve games—and four of 'em playable! What a great idea. Sony has far exceeded my expectations.

That night, I had two friends over; both casual gamers. Ten minutes after I turned the power on, these guys were going nuts! I didn't even try to sell them on the system—they took one look at **Toshinden**, **Tekken**, **Twisted Metal** and **Ridge Racer** and then proceeded to yap for the rest of the night about how badly they wanted to go out and buy their own PlayStation. Seeing is believing!

Thomas Hornsby
Erie, PA

You're right, Thomas. Word of mouth is going to be one of Sony's most effective forms of advertising, that's for sure.



ME WANT IMPORTS

Dear Ultimate Gamer,
Hey, guys! Nice mag. I'm seriously considering purchasing a PlayStation, but I am very concerned about import compatibility. You see, I happen to be a big import game freak. I've got close to a thousand bucks worth of import games and I want a PlayStation more than anything. Does the U.S. console run import games? I heard that there's a way to do it, but no one seems to know exactly how. Do I need to have a switch installed, or what? If the American PlayStation does not run imports, then I will be forced to spring for a more expensive Japanese console. I hope you guys print this letter because your answer is vital. Thanks.

Curtis Lowder
San Marcos, TX

The people want to know the truth! Well, Curtis, as far as the PlayStation's import compatibility is concerned, the U.S. PlayStation does not run imports—at least, not legitimately. Let's just say that all you need is a paper clip and a copy of an American PlayStation CD to get it to work. While we have tested the validity of this trick, and it works, we do not—repeat—DO NOT recommend this procedure, as it may wear out the CD drive motor. Have fun!

BLACK IS BEAUTIFUL

Dear Ultimate Gamer,
Yes, it's my real name, but I'm not that dork on TV. I have two questions. One, why are the CDs for the PlayStation black on the backside? Are they any different than normal-looking CDs? Two, what's up with Sony's D-Pad on the controllers? I know it's not strictly 4-directional, but it looks and feels inferior; kind of like the one on an old NES or Duo controller.

Joey Lawrence
Yonkers, NY

The primary reason PlayStation CDs look the way they do is because no one else has black CDs. Besides, they look cool. Actually, it may have more to do with copy-protection. We're not sure what the reasoning is behind Sony's controllers, though. Personally, I prefer the D-Pad on the Genesis controllers (the Saturn D-Pad feels cheap). By the way, we're glad to know that you're not that dork on TV.

JAGUAR, TOO

Dear Ultimate Gamer,
Judging by your interview with Sam Tramiel in the November issue of UG, I have to say that I have a renewed faith in the company. Atari has been viewed as the bad apple in the barrel for a long time and yes, some of this was brought on by itself. But now it appears that they know what they've got to do to get ahead (Jag CD, Jaguar 2) and I'm starting to get pretty excited.

Kevin Dunlop
Wantagh, NY

Dear Ultimate Gamer,
In regards to ongoing comments made in Ultimate Gamer about the Atari Jaguar, I just want to say that as long as you take it at face value, the Jag as a system does not disappoint. For a measly $149, you get a pretty powerful piece of hardware. Besides that, there are certain Jag games which are



A recent Jaguar TV commercial. This guy is obviously nutty as a fruitcake.

unbelievably bitchin' like **T2000**, **Ultra Vortek** and **Doom**. Face it, Jaguar rules, fools!

Darren McDowell
Bridgeton, MO

Dear Ultimate Gamer,
I cannot believe Sam Tramiel actually thinks anyone in their right mind is going to give a rat's ass about the upcoming "Jaguar 2" system. As if it wasn't bad enough that people like myself got sucked into their line of BS with the original Jaguar; now they're developing another one? Come on! By the time they finish production on their new system, Sega, Sony and Nintendo will all but have crushed the ever-lovin' life out of Atari's hopes for success. Even 3DO and its M2 have a better chance. Trip Hawkins may have made a few errors, and the machine may have been far too expensive, but 3DO has proven to be a valid platform for next-gen gaming. What do you think?

Adam Hayward
East Windsor, CT

Dear Ultimate Gamer,
I just finished reading your interview with Atari's Sam Tramiel in the November UG. Three things in it really irked me.

One: Sam conveniently dodged the question about why there's no third-party support by saying that third-party companies "have to take huge risks with inventory and expensive cartridge stocks." No, really?! Gee, that's unique! The real answer is because no one believes in them any more. Two: The thing about the guy who wrote them the letter smeared with "I love Atari" all over it made me nauseous. I bet they've (Atari) got that one framed on the wall somewhere at the office. Three: So Sam paid $250 for a VCR, big deal! In this world, you get what you pay for. I know many, many people who go out of their way not only to get the best price, but the best quality, too. If I want a bare-bones, no remote, big-as-a-tank VCR, I'll pick a $129 unit. But if I want a Hi-Fi Stereo VCR with built-in VCR-Plus and learning remote and I see it sitting on the shelf at K-Mart priced at $179, I know something's not quite right. There are just different products for different markets.

I guess my point is that Atari doesn't need to worry one bit about the competition putting them out of business... they're doing a fine job of screwing themselves!

John Bledsoe
San Diego, CA

We get more letters regarding Jaguar than any other system. Why? Because Jaguar readers are a very loyal bunch, but apparently they're not too happy with the level of support they're receiving from Atari. One piece of good news for Atari owners is the "free upgrade" Atari has given them. The Jaguar is now being officially referred to as the Jaguar 64, although close inspection will reveal that the main processor of the Jaguar is categorically not a 64-bit chip. Atari claims that the Jaguar operates under "64-bit architecture" meaning the combination of graphics and sound math processing produces 64-bit results. This claim has been widely disputed in the past, but nobody has categorically proven—to our satisfaction, at least—whether the Jaguar is a 64-bit machine or not.



VF 2 for Saturn will indeed run at 60 fps.

DON'T CALL US, WE'LL CALL YOU...

Dear ULTIMATE GAMER,

I consider myself to be a pretty creative individual, and I have thoroughly enjoyed playing video and computer games for a good many years. What I'd like to know is, how does one get involved in the creative process with gaming companies? I would really love to work for a company like Williams or Namco. My computer skills aren't the greatest at the moment, but boy, have I got some good ideas! I would really like to take a shot at being on a game-development team.

Gabriel Seager
Watsonville, CA

There are two ways to get into the industry. You can go to school (even a game design school) or you can present a company with some talent they can't do without. Some people go ahead and design games completely before submitting or selling them to software publishers. Some companies will take on junior staff, but you do have to have a marketable and demonstrable skill.

GIMME GIMME MORE PREVIEWS

Dear ULTIMATE GAMER,

I'm going to be honest. At first, I didn't know what to think of your new mag, because there are so many out there already. But after reading your November issue from cover to cover, I have to admit: I am impressed. The review section is the absolute best I have ever seen, with loads of screenshots and a healthy dose of information, along with a seemingly fair opinion of how good (or bad) the games are. The only thing I'd like to see in your mag in the future is more previews. I really want to see as much new product as possible in advance, so I know what to expect.

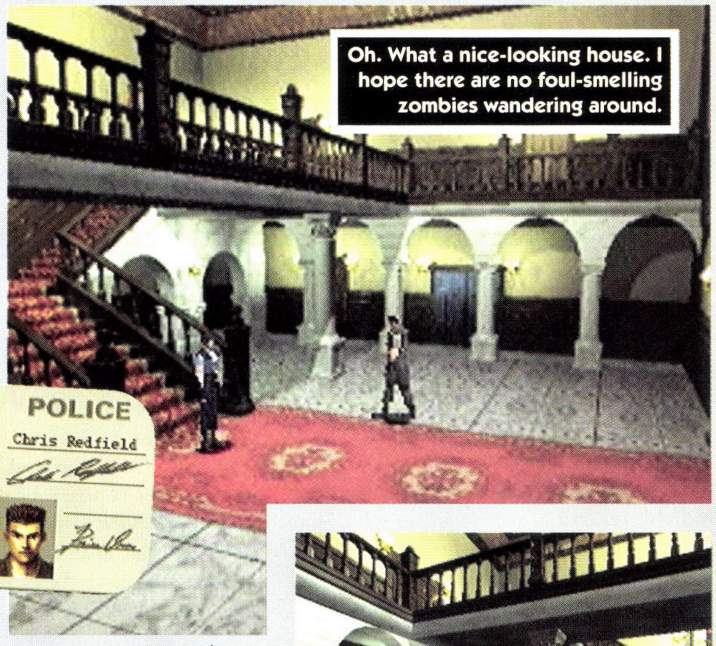
One last thing: Is **VF 2** for the Saturn really going to run at 60 frames per second, or is that just a load?

Doug Arnold
Fergus Falls, MN

Thanks Doug. "Load"... heh, heh... you said "load"... Anyway, we're building up the previews section and we agree with you. We too want to see the latest games before everyone else, and to that end, we scour the globe looking for hot new titles. Previews are very important, but you should also remember that with the ridiculous price of games, reviews are also of paramount importance. As reviewers, we have to be very careful to keep things in perspective. We always remember that we get the games for free. It's easy to think a mediocre game represents value for money when you didn't actually pay for it, but if you spend 60 bucks because of a review you read in a magazine and find out it sucks, you'll probably come looking for us.



RESIDENT EVIL



Not much scares me you know. I'm tough, see? Hard as nails. I'm so tough I thought **The Exorcist** was an educational movie. I'm so tough I thought **Friday the Thirteenth** was a public holiday. I eat gravel and spit rocks.**Resident Evil**, however, made me, quite literally, pee my pants. Why? Because it's scary, that's why.

My macho posturing was cut short by the game's all-pervading sense of menace. The creepy music, the atmospheric graphics and the horrifying plotline are enough to turn your hair white.

Now, the programmers of **Alone In The Dark** will probably lose their minds when they read this next part. Resident Evil takes the same basic premise, improves on it vastly, and adds gameplay features that the original could have used in the first place.

The result is a highly derivative game that still has a true feeling of originality. In terms of game physics, Resident Evil takes polygon character movement to new levels. In this early preview version, there's only one playable character, but he looks kind of like a smoother, more realistic **Tekken** fighter.

As you move from room to room, the "camera" angle switches to show the action from a different perspective. This not only affects the look and style of the game, but the gameplay too. Your character control is very simple, but getting used to the sudden switches in orientation may take a little getting used to. Basically, you can rotate your character, move forwards or backwards, or aim a weapon. Forward is always a tap on the up key, so that's your main bearing.

The music and sound effects that





STRENGTHS

- **The graphics**
- **The sound**
- **The gameplay**

WEAKNESSES

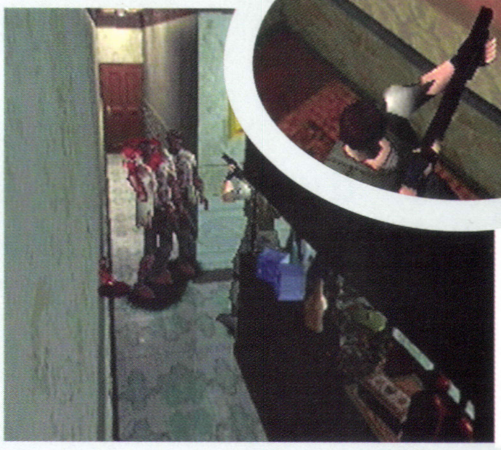
- **Don't be ridiculous, this game is going to be incredible. At this point there are only strengths.**


Must destroy frog monster-type thing.













accompany Resident Evil are as spooky as they come. An eerie cinematic soundtrack changes to suit the action in any given room. If nothing much is going on, the violins or piano simply keep the pace going. If you go into a room with something dangerous in it, you'll be given aural clues. This, more than anything, gives the game its intense atmosphere of suspense and danger.

The plot still has to be ironed out, but the basic premise is similar to that of the **Seventh Guest**: You have to investigate creepy goings-on at an old estate. The difference is that Resident Evil is very much action-based. Puzzles are short and to the point. You also have more freedom of movement. With the right assortment of keys, you can move in and out of the house, check out the local church or even explore a graveyard (not really a good idea, let me advise you).

This marks a huge departure for Capcom, a company previously noted for its straightforward action titles, like **Street Fighter** and **Mega Man X**. The term 'interactive movie' is often overused and sometimes in the wrong context. Resident Evil represents a redefinition of the term. It feels and looks like a movie, only this time it's truly interactive. You don't have to point and click at anything. You don't have to solve any tedious puzzles. You take on the role of a character—with **real** character—and you directly affect the outcome of a long and engrossing adventure.


A big spider creature attacks from the ceiling.

Everyone in the office who's seen and played Resident Evil has come away not only thinking that it's excellent, but that it may have created a new genre, as well as set a new standard in video gaming.

The game is still some way off at the moment, but its brooding mix of Poe-style melancholy and brutal violence may just make this one of the best games around.

—Frank O'Connor



INFO

Game:	Resident Evil
Format:	PlayStation
Publisher:	Capcom
Game Style:	Erm...
Completion Status:	60%
Release date:	TBA
Price:	TBA

Can you connect the dot?



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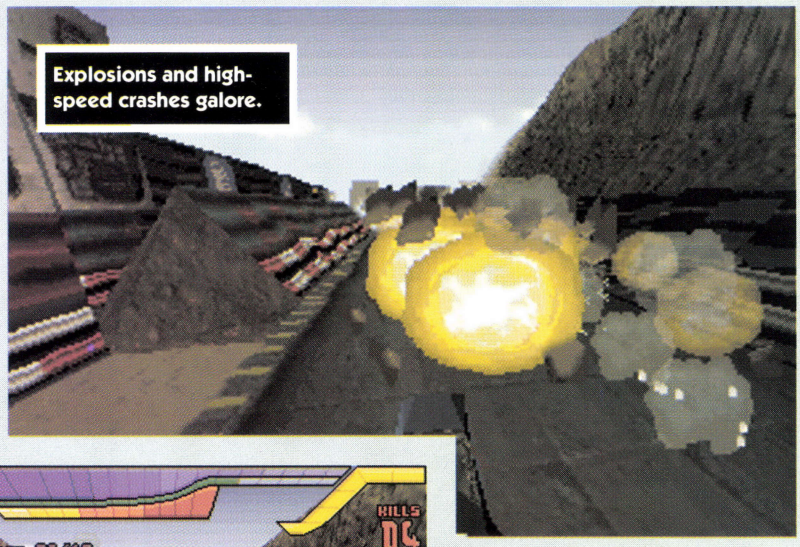
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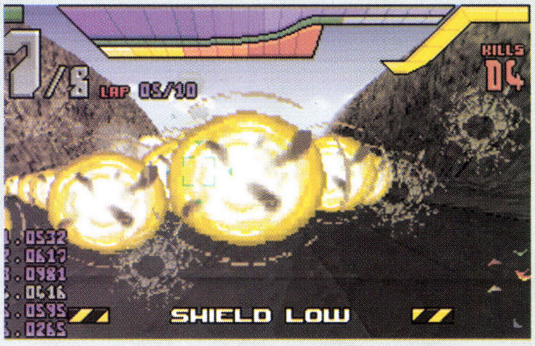
HIGH OCTANE


Explosions and high-speed crashes galore.

Bullfrog is less than famous for its action-oriented games. So **High Octane** marks something of a departure for the company usually responsible for providing the world with wacky strategy and god-games.

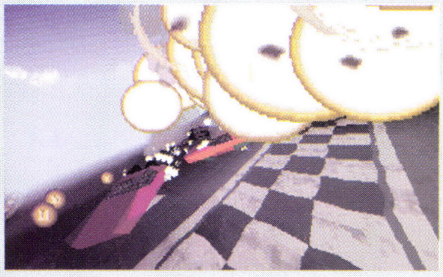
This is an out-and-out blast-fest, taking the racing game to new extremes. Of course, the racing game has been taken to new extremes before. As a matter of fact, the racing game has probably been taken to about eight new extremes in this issue alone. The problem with new games machines is that when people find out they're good for a particular type of game, then that's all that you get to see on that machine for months. The PlayStation is very good for racing games so, as a result, there are plenty of them.

Bullfrog must be commended for taking a slightly different approach though. The main focus of High Octane isn't necessarily driving; it's predominantly shooting.



HIGH OCTANE adds some much-needed ultra-violence to the rather staid racing genre.



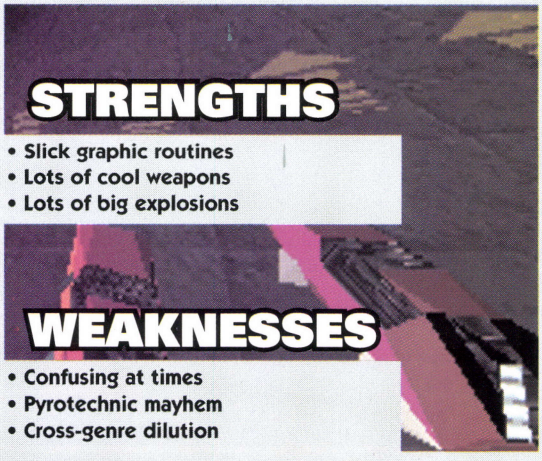


Although the premise of futuristic, violent racing with weapons has been pretty much carved in stone by **Wipeout**, Bullfrog's interpretation of the theme is markedly different. Where Wipeout required judicious and strategic use of weapons, High Octane requires malicious and spasmodic firepower.

A good game of High Octane should look pretty much like an explosion at a fireworks factory, making the actual racing very difficult to keep track of.

This confusion is one of the few criticisms we can level at a game which, at this point, looks simply stunning. Bullfrog's understanding of technology and gameplay is almost peerless in this industry. The company's first foray into 32-bit action should prove to be an explosive and important event.

—Frank O'Connor



STRENGTHS

- Slick graphic routines
- Lots of cool weapons
- Lots of big explosions

WEAKNESSES

- Confusing at times
- Pyrotechnic mayhem
- Cross-genre dilution



INFO

Game:	High Octane
Format:	Sony PlayStation
Publisher:	Electronic Arts
Game Style:	Racing
Completion Status:	60%
Release date:	TBA
Price:	TBA

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Mystery Word Grid

	H				___
		E			___
P	I	N	C	H	W
	R				___
S					___

MYSTERY WORD

WORD LIST and LETTER CODE chart

PINCH .....W	PRESS.....K	BLAST .....A	WRECK.....D
BREAK.....Z	PUNCH .....S	SPRAY C	TURBO.....V
STOMP .....T	STAND.....R	PRESS .....E	DREAM....O
CRUSH.....I	SCORE .....H	SLANT L	CHASE.....P

MYSTERY WORD CLUE:
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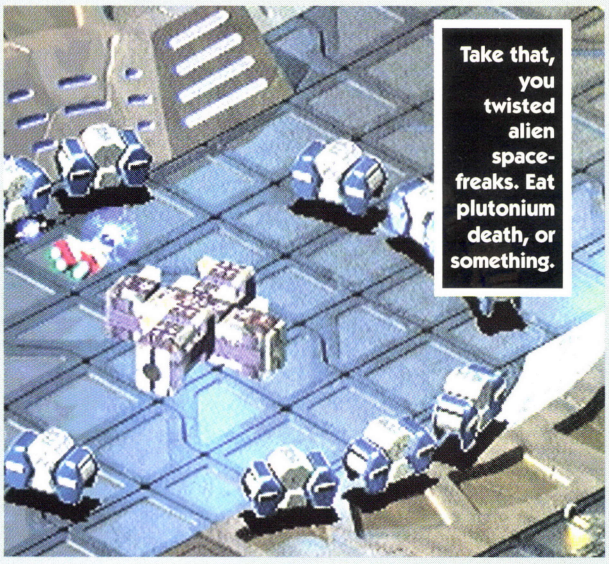
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VIEWPOINT



Electronic Arts isn't too famous for shoot-'em-ups. It's famous for all kinds of other things, like sports games and simulations and just about everything else, but not shooters.

EA's decision to publish **Viewpoint** on the PlayStation is a pretty odd one. The game originally appeared on the Neo Geo system from a very nice company called American Sammy. The Japanese division of this company is just called Sammy. I think that's a pretty cool name for a company. It would be nice if Microsoft changed their name to "Dave" or IBM changed their name to "Missy." No more high-powered corporate nonsense. 'I'd like a can of Mike Cola,' you could say, or, 'Could I please have a bar of Kevin?' That'd be neat.

However, that's not generally the way of things, and besides, it's totally nonsensical. Back to the issue at hand, which in this particular case is a vastly improved shoot-'em-up.

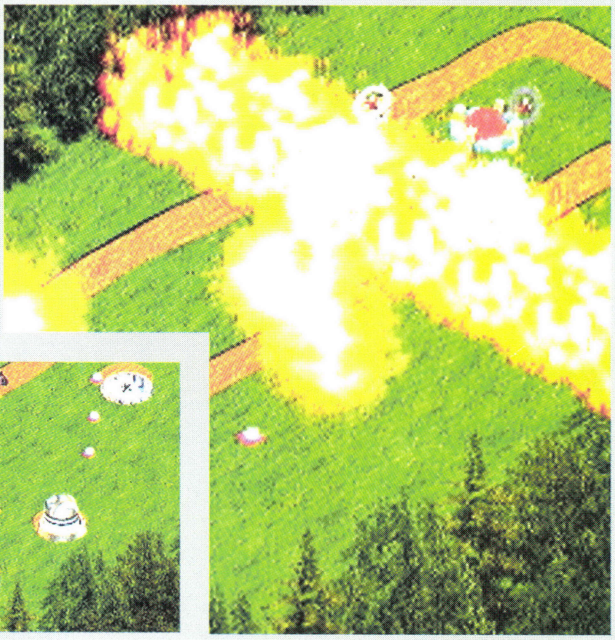
Basically, this is the same as the Neo Geo version, but the PlayStation's amazing light-sourcing effects have been put to good use. All of the explosions and special effects from the original game have been beefed up substantially and all of the original backgrounds have been redrawn totally from scratch. All of this gives Viewpoint's latest incarnation a completely fresh visual appeal.

The gameplay has changed not a jot, however. Viewpoint owes a lot to a now ancient Sega coin-op called **Zaxxon**, a shooter set in space and featuring a similar forced-perspective 3-D, ahem, viewpoint.

In Zaxxon you could adjust the altitude of your spacecraft. This is not an option in Viewpoint and this is where the games have marked differences. In Viewpoint, the gameplay is much clearer.

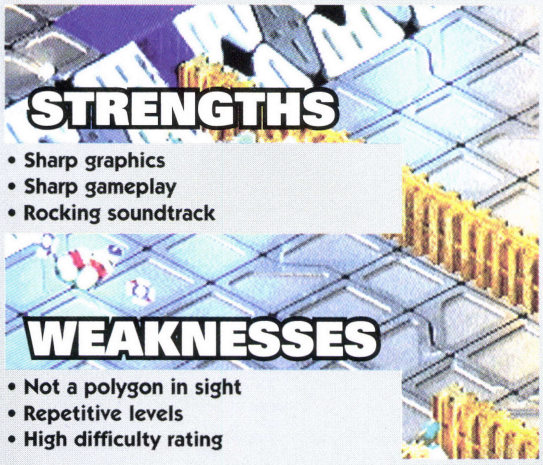
One of the things that makes Viewpoint a little more interesting than the average shooter is the inclusion of almost puzzle-like elements. Although hardly taxing mentally, they are slightly more of a challenge than the usual





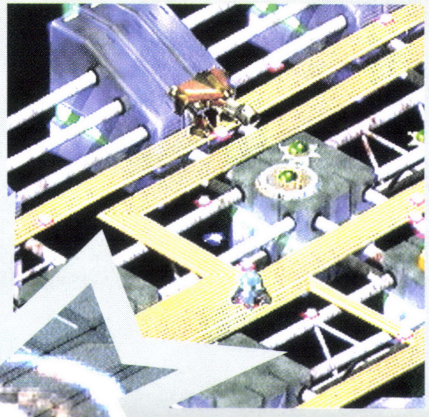
Goodness, gracious, great balls of fire!

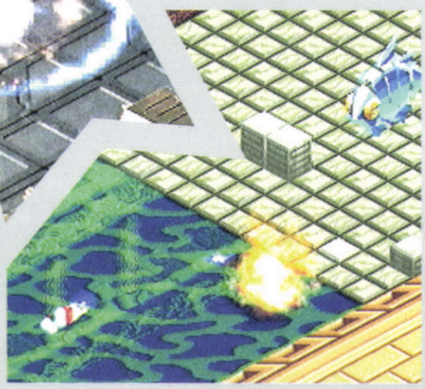


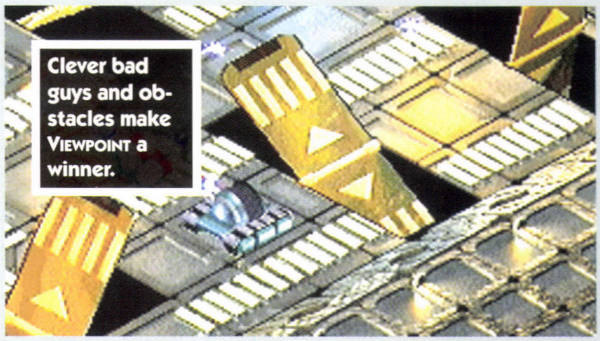




The forced isometric viewpoint can be a little confusing, but it makes the game that bit more interesting to play.







Clever bad guys and obstacles make VIEWPOINT a winner.



More color and greater detail make this version look better than the Neo Geo original.

whirling bad guys. These elements include gates that have to be blasted open, giant clockwork cogs that must be moved to allow progress and morphing structures that pop up at the most inconvenient moments.

Now, one of the things that should definitely be mentioned when you're talking about Viewpoint is its almost insane difficulty level. Fortunately this has been retained in the conversion to PlayStation. Viewpoint is still one of the most difficult shooters around.

The graphics actually add to the challenge, with explosions sometimes obscuring the action. Safe routes have to be negotiated through levels, while you're constantly fending off attacks from alien fighters. It's very tough stuff.

You're given a more than healthy supply of weapons to squeeze you through the darker reaches of space and these are all extremely similar to the suite of weapons found in Irem's **R-Type**. The weapons may lack originality, but the bad guys don't, surprisingly. They include a weird and wonderful assortment of biological and non-organic hazards. The patterns of movement this crowd follows are half the charm of the game. Just when you think you know where a bad guy's headed, he'll turn back on himself and give you a nasty photon shock.

There are a couple of hidden secrets scattered through Viewpoint, but this game is aimed directly at a very hard core of shoot-'em-up fans who prefer their action to be straightforward and uncomplicated. Not a polygon or a 3-D routine in sight, and it's all the more welcome for that.

—Frank O'Connor



INFO

Game:	Viewpoint
Format:	Sony PlayStation
Publisher:	Electronic Arts
Game Style:	Shooter
Completion Status:	60%
Release date:	TBA
Price:	TBA

HIGH VELOCITY



The Japanese saloon cars are tricky to handle on tight curves like this one.

Daytona USA came as something of a disappointment for Saturn owners waiting for their machine's power to be vindicated. The lousy frame-rate, terrible clipping and overall sense of shoddiness were a source of some surprise to many. Of course the game itself was great, but the graphics sucked.

High Velocity from Atlus goes some way towards redressing the balance, with almost double the frame-rate of Daytona, equally impressive texture-mapping and an overall sense of speed and fluidity that hasn't been equalled to date.

The game itself falls somewhere between Daytona USA and **Ridge Racer**. You drive the high-powered saloons and hatchbacks found in Ridge Racer, on tracks very reminiscent of those found in Daytona USA. Sounds like an ideal combination, doesn't it? Well, the good news is that this is pretty much the best racing game on the Saturn so far. It faces some stiff competition from the upcoming **Sega Rally** and, to a lesser extent, Time Warner's surprisingly good conversion of **Virtua Racing**.

High Velocity gets absolutely no points for originality and has to get a slap



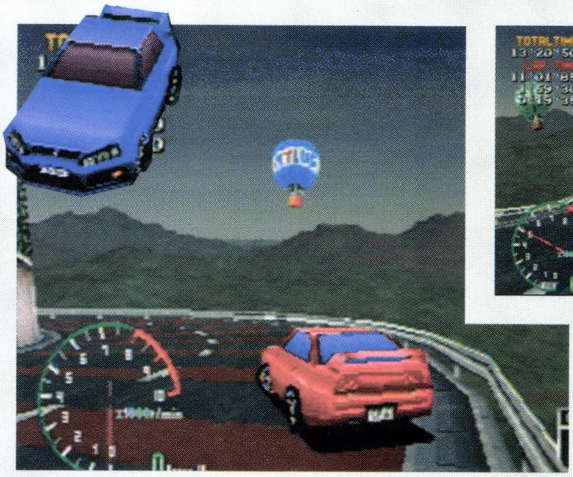
Amazing texture mapped graphics set the scene

STRENGTHS

- Fluid textured graphics
- Plenty of tracks
- Lots of different cars

WEAKNESSES

- Very derivative of DAYTONA
- Sometimes ugly tracks
- No real "personality"





A large choice of tracks give the game much-needed variety and depth.





on the rear for coming up with the least awe-inspiring title of the year, but it should be commended for sheer technical brilliance. Atlus has always been pretty much a secondary force in the world of video games, releasing a steady stream of quality titles without ever setting the world on fire. The company has enjoyed success with titles like **Power Instinct**, but nothing to match the sheer force of companies like Namco or Capcom. High Velocity may turn out to mark a change in direction for Atlus. The game has received a tremendous reception from impatient Saturn owners, who've long been waiting for a half-decent racer to grace their machine.

The car handling is the only thing that's questionable about this otherwise faultless title. Now, we can't say for sure how the finished game will shape up, but the early game we tried with the provisional car suffered from the same control problems as the Saturn version of Daytona. The car appears to lack torque and takes corners badly when using a joypad. This problem will be remedied in two ways. One is the inclusion of support for the Saturn steering wheel and the other is a large selection of different cars, each with its own specific strengths and weaknesses. One of the few games to achieve a real level of harmony with joypad control was Namco's Ridge Racer. The weight and steering ratio on the car felt perfect, with more feed being given to the steering as the curves sharpened. If I was in charge of producing a driving game for any system, the first thing I'd do would be to rip off the Namco code for joypad control.

That said, Atlus has taken a distinct and enjoyable approach to its racer and the results are very impressive. Daytona owners will probably be very excited by what is in many respects a far superior title. Atlus managed to produce this game without using the new graphics library that was given out to developers by Sega of Japan, so imagine what they'll be capable of when they get hold of the new stuff.

A smoother, faster sequel to High Velocity seems almost certain, and game number one is set to be a winner.

—Frank O'Connor

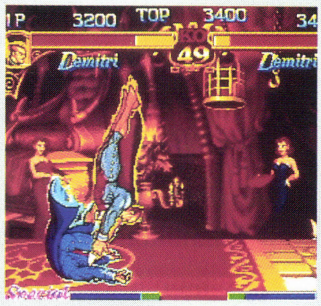




INFO

Game:	High Velocity
Format:	Sega Saturn
Publisher:	Atlus
Game Style:	Racing
Completion Status:	70%
Release date:	January
Price:	TBA

DARKSTALKERS



It suddenly occurs to me that I have absolutely no idea what the hell the plot of **Darkstalkers** is all about. At the same time, it occurs to me that the plot probably doesn't really matter a great deal. So let's just make up our own, shall we?

You are Demetrei, a vampire with a problem. You live in Transylvania and frankly, it rains all the time. Grey mountains, miserable, incessant drizzle and a generally grim atmosphere. So you decide to go on vacation to warmer, more temperate climes.

Unfortunately, each of your potential destinations contains a belligerent and territorial monster species. If you want to relax by the shores of the Nile, you'll have to fight a giant Mummy. If you want to explore the lochs and glens of Scotland, you'll find you have to take on a screaming Succubus.

These are just a few of the potentially lethal critters you'll encounter o a your supernatural jaunt through the darker reaches of the world. This is classic schlock horror with a healthy dose of **Streetfighter** and some of the most heavily stylized graphics yet seen in a video game.

Capcom apparently has no inhibitions when it comes to releasing countless versions of the same game in the arcades. It has no problems with sales either. Capcom arcade games, regardless of how repetitive they seem at first, are among the biggest-selling arcade machines on Earth.

The Japanese simply can't get enough of this kind of fighting action, and Darkstalkers managed to knock the mighty **Virtua Fighter** from its throne on initial release. The combination of secret moves, hidden bosses and new fighting nuances made this and its sequel sure-fire winners.

The good news for PlayStation owners is that Capcom seems to have translated the coin-op perfectly, right down to the smallest detail. **Ultimate Gamer**'s resident Darkstalkers expert managed to get himself in quite a state when he saw



Fabulous special moves are the order of the day, all very much like those found in Street Fighter.



STRENGTHS

- Classic Capcom gameplay
- Cool stylized graphics
- Wonderful characters

WEAKNESSES

- Derivative of Street Fighter
- Terrible soundtrack
- Silly special moves



Monsters from around the globe.





Colorful backgrounds and great characters galore.









The backgrounds are extremely detailed.

that every character, move and graphic had been flawlessly translated. He was even more excited to discover that Capcom has translated the sometimes hideously cheesy soundtrack in its cacophonic entirety.

Now this game's appeal lies squarely in the eyes of Street Fighter fans. If you don't like the standard 2-D fighting genre, then this has nothing new to offer. If you do like this kind of thing then you'll be more than thrilled to discover that the game contains cool things like juggling, combos, combo-breakers and all manner of other fighting-related fun.

Considering the wealth of 3-D fighters that are already available for next generation platforms, it's an indication of Capcom's confidence in the strength of the Darkstalkers brand-name that it should release this game at all.

Personally, I think the game is excellent. It has a charm and appeal born of real design talent and a genuine love of horror movies. The gameplay is smooth, fluid and involving. You really want to see the ending for each character and for that reason, this is a good one-player game.

—Frank O'Connor



This game is called "Vampire" in the Land of the Rising Sun.

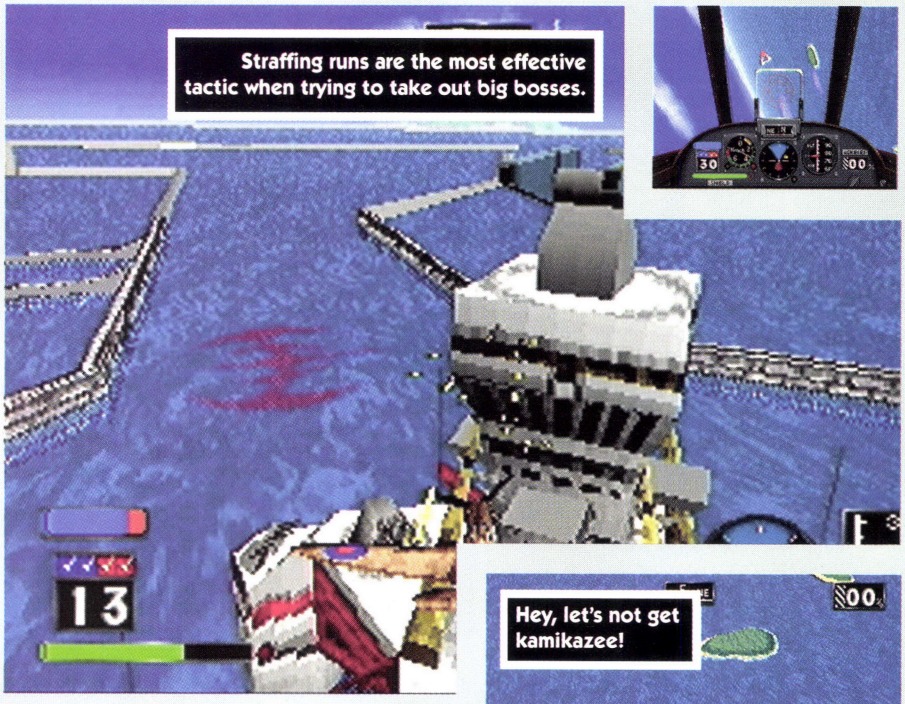


INFO

Game:	Darkstalkers
Format:	Sony PlayStation
Publisher:	Capcom
Game Style:	Fighting
Completion Status:	80%
Release date:	TBA
Price:	$50

WING ARMS

Straffing runs are the most effective tactic when trying to take out big bosses.



Some things in life are destined to remain a mystery. Like, why did O.J. walk? Why does Ted Koppel look like Alfred E. Neuman? And why do most flight sims make me fall right to sleep? I don't know. Maybe I just don't want to know. All I do know is this, **Wing Arms** from Sega broke the stereotypical mold of boring, I'd-rather-be-getting-a-root-canal flight sims I'm used to playing.

As decent as a game like Namco's **Air Combat** is, Wing Arms is where it's really at. If you're like me, the biggest setback to playing these realistic, buttons-and-gauges-out-the-butt flight simulators is the boredom. They're real to a **fault**. Sure, in a real wartime dogfight, it may take a while before you see some action, but in the world of video games, who has the patience to roam around through the clouds for half an hour just to dogfight an enemy for two minutes? That's how a lot of these games operate—and that sucks. I want action. I want death, destruction and utter mayhem. And if I don't get it, I feel cheated out of my 60 bucks! Call me shallow, but that's how I feel.

Wing Arms at times even gives a superb game like **Warhawk** a run for its money. You get front, side and rear-views, and a control setup that works well without bogging the player down with a gazillion switches and display indicators. The missions are exciting, with excellent end-level bosses like aircraft carriers and the like. The AI of the enemies is dead-on, oftentimes making you feel as if someone is truly attempting to snuff out your life. There is a multitude of aircraft to select from, too—so many, you may never become completely bored with the game. And the music? The music, my friends, is absolutely without peer; in fact, it's a full-on orchestral symphony, complete with massive crescendos.



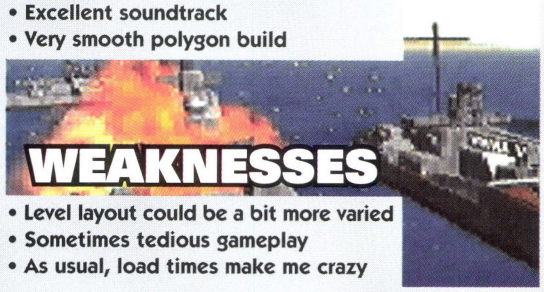
So far, Wing Arms looks to be a hit. Unless the unthinkable happens and the game gets screwed-up in some strange way, Saturn owners can do themselves a big favor: Buy this game when it comes out. Unless, of course, your idea of a good time is flying around with nothing to do.

—Jim Loftus



STRENGTHS

- High production values
- Excellent soundtrack
- Very smooth polygon build



WEAKNESSES

- Level layout could be a bit more varied
- Sometimes tedious gameplay
- As usual, load times make me crazy



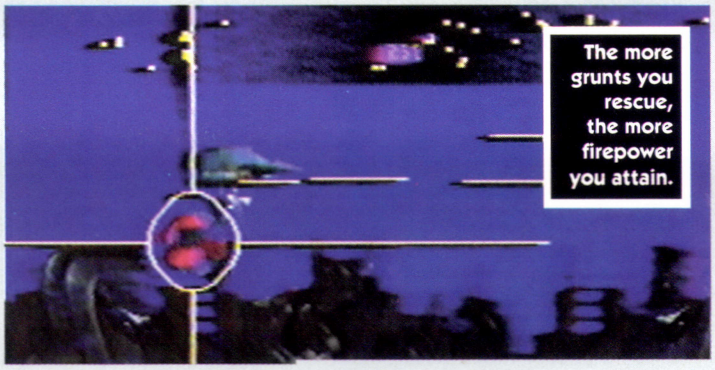


INFO

Game:	Wing Arms
Format:	Sega Saturn
Publisher:	Sega
Game Style:	Flight Sim/Shooter
Completion Status:	90%
Release date:	November
Price:	$59.95

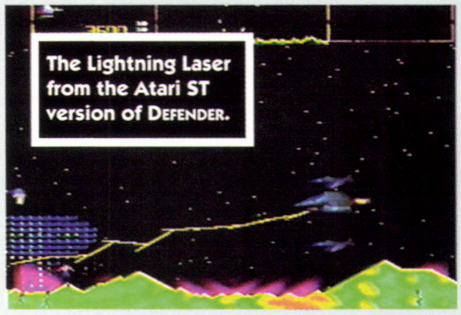
DEFENDER 2000





Atari owes much of its recent success—or rather, its survival—to a man named Jeff Minter. Whether you love the Jaguar or absolutely despise its existence, **Tempest 2000** scored a direct hit with gamers all over the world back in 1994, and the main man behind that little project was none other than the aforementioned Mr. Minter.

Minter's latest cartridge effort, **Defender 2000**, has been in development for nearly a full year now, and judging by what we've seen and played of the game so far, it's a safe bet that he won't be standing in the unemployment line any time soon. That's not to say Defender 2000 contains the same magical, addictive formula which made Tempest 2000 the hit it was—because it doesn't—but the game seems nonetheless very playable, and after all, that's what counts, right?

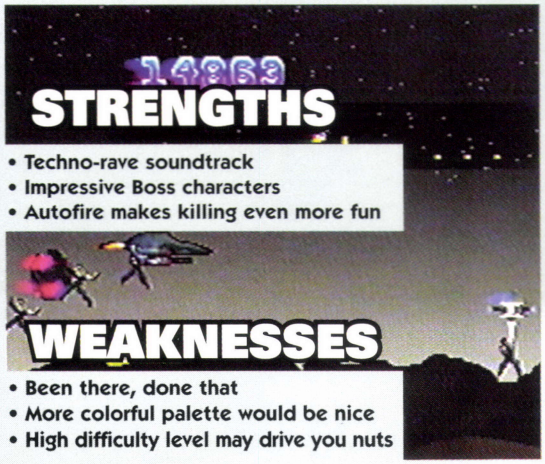




The original Defender coin-op from Williams was a veritable quarter magnet back in the early '80s. For the '90s version, we get the original arcade mode, along with souped-up "Plus" and "2000" modes. Now for the details. First, the "Plus" and "2000" modes will offer two AI droids for assistance in mopping-up the bad guys. Second, those little helpless guys scurrying along the bottom of the playfield (whom you might remember from the original) can now be scooped up and daisy-chained to the bottom of your ship for added firepower. Third, weapons upgrades will allow for new methods of mass-destruction; along with standard smart bombs (Defender), there are inviso (**Stargate**) and lightning lasers (Atari ST). Bonus rounds? You got 'em! Music? Let's just say that the same team responsible for Tempest 2000's incredible techno-rave soundtrack have had very little spare time on their hands lately.

With 3-D rendered graphics, numerous unique gameplay elements and parallax scrolling out the yin-yang, Defender 2000 should be hot enough to please even the most demanding Jaguar owners. Heck, there may even be a hidden llama or two in there!

—Jim Loftus





INFO

Game:	Defender 2000
Format:	Jaguar
Publisher:	Atari
Game Style:	Shooter
Completion Status:	90%
Release date:	December
Price:	$59.95

CAPTAIN QUAZAR ONLY ON 3DO GOLDEN GATE: TREASURE BY THE BAY ONLY ON 3DO P

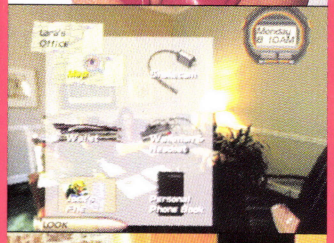
BATTLESPORT ONLY ON 3DO STAR FIGHTER ONLY ON 3DO SNOW JOB ONLY ON 3DO

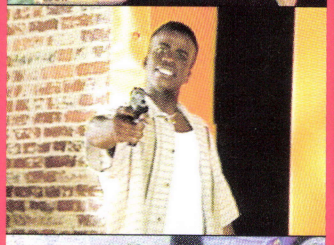
Sex. Drugs. Violence. Weapons. San Francisco. Men In Tights.



SNOW JOB™





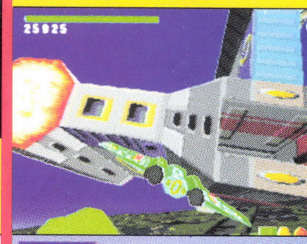


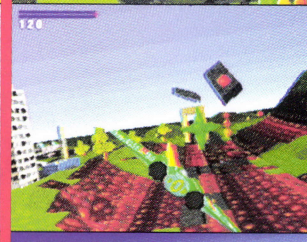


Tracy Scoggins (*Dynasty, Lois & Clark*) is New York assistant DA Lara Calabreeze - the long arm (and legs) of the law. One of 20 suspects is out to snuff her. No wonder her fuse is shorter than her skirt. Guns, gangs, strippers. Quick. Somebody frisk me.



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3DO, the 3DO logos, BattleSport, Captain Quazar, Golden Gate: Treasure by the Bay, Phoenix 3, Snow Job and Star Fighter are trade

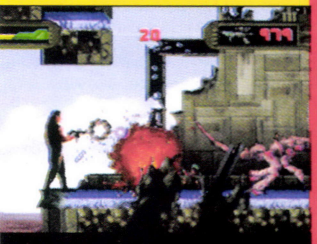
EASURE BY THE BAY ONLY ON 3DO PHOENIX 3 ONLY ON 3DO

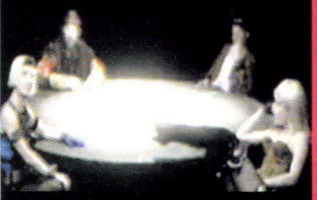
IIX 3 ONLY ON 3DO BATTLESPORT ONLY ON 3DO STAR FIGHTER ONLY ON 3DO SNOW JOB ONLY ON 3DO CAPTAIN QUAZAR ONLY ON 3DO GOLDEN GATE: TREASURE BY THE BAY





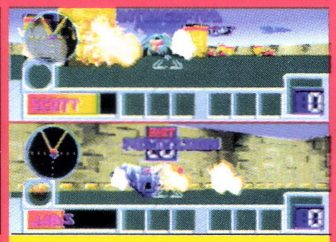
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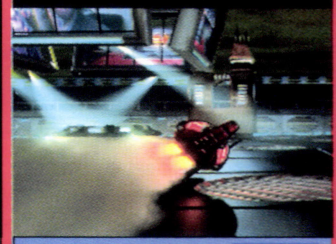
Like great space combat and bitchin' weapons? So do we. As hero Derek Freeman, you must locate starships and brave pilots to fight some surly aliens. Of course, that entails shooting the green snot out of them. Can't we all live in peace and harmony? In a word, no.



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Arena football meets General Patton. You choose a tank. You load up on firepower. You enter the arena. You try to score goals while opponents try to blast you to hell and back. It's a sport where a cup doesn't offer much protection.





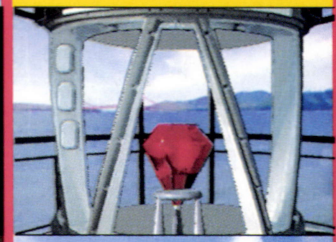








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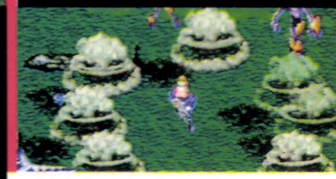


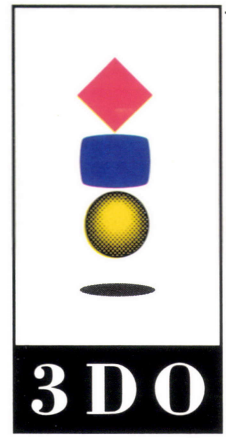






"Look! Up in the sky! It's a rocket!" No, it's a grown man in very snug tights. Meet Captain Quazar - the bumbling superhero with powers far beyond mortal men (and brains far below). Battle evildoers with an arsenal of weapons and the wits of the witless Captain.





WE GOT IT. THEY DON'T.

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ONLY ON 3DO CAPTAIN QUAZAR ONLY ON 3DO GOLDEN GATE

SKELETON WARRIORS



Can there really be any moral problem with killing dead people? I mean, they're already dead, aren't they? What harm could there possibly be in whacking them with a great big sword. Personally, I think that anyone who runs around scaring people after they're dead is just asking for it.

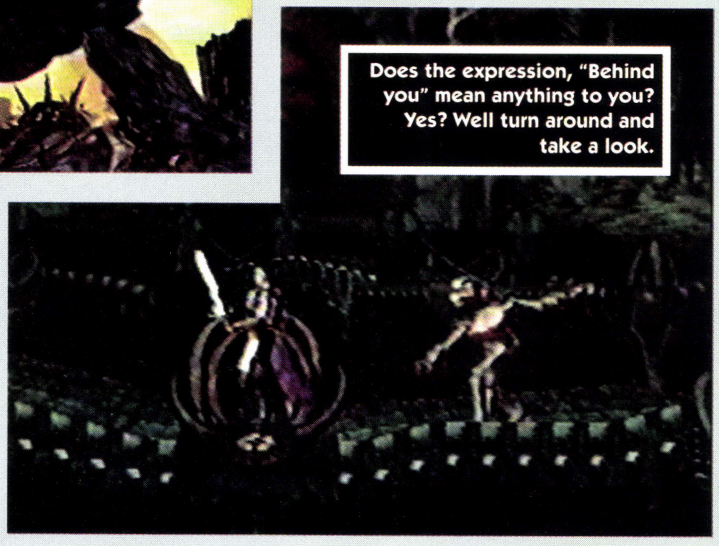
Skeleton Warriors gives you the chance to whack as many dead guys as you like with a very big sword. It takes its inspiration from Ray Harryhausen movies as well as Sam Raimi's **The Evil Dead**. The gameplay however, is one hundred percent Rastan Saga.

It's very simplistic stuff. you play the part of a warrior on a mission to destroy the armies of the dead and generally sort good from bad. There's probably a beautiful princess involved somwhere along the line too. What makes this different to the other games of this ilk is the graphics.

Skeleton Warriors is nothing short of a masterpiece. It's been a long time since a platform game looked so good that you had to play it just to see what the next level looked like. This is just such a game.

The backgrounds are suitably hellish and disturbing, with more than a hint of the now clichéd Giger appeal. The sprites are equally cool, with some of the best animation we've ever seen on a game of this kind. Sega actually unveiled this at the Sega Gamer's Day, and to much critical acclaim. It's very easy to forget about the more conventional game styles, with all the emphasis on 3-D these days.

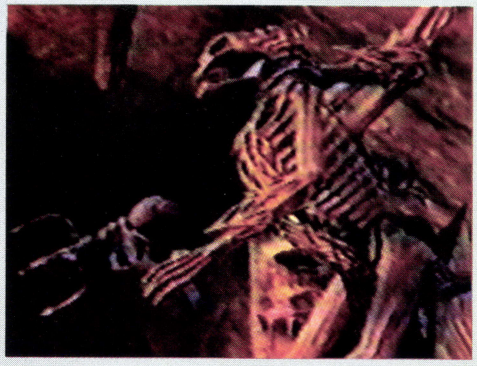




Does the expression, "Behind you" mean anything to you? Yes? Well turn around and take a look.

If nothing else, Skeleton Warriors proves that you can teach an old dog new tricks. There are literally dozens of weird creatures for you to practice your sword skills on, each with their own unique method of attack. Of course, you have some pretty unique defensive moves of your own and you can upgrade your sword, as well as collect a couple of other nifty weapons.

Learning to fight properly is about half the battle. Although your character is responsive, he's no Bruce Lee and timing becomes an essential part of your plan of



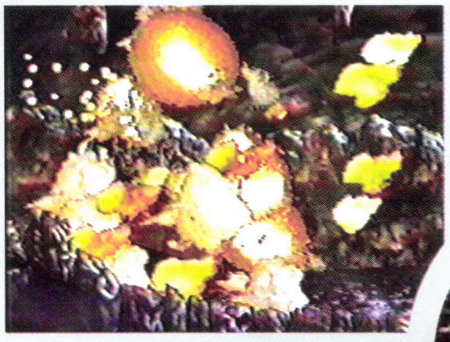


STRENGTHS

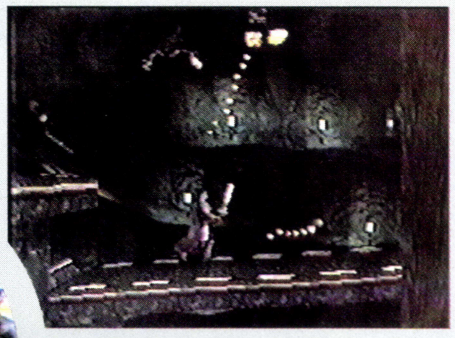
- Fabulous backgrounds
- Wonderfully animated sprites
- Stunning music

WEAKNESSES

- Derivative gameplay
- Derivative scenario
- Very un-scary



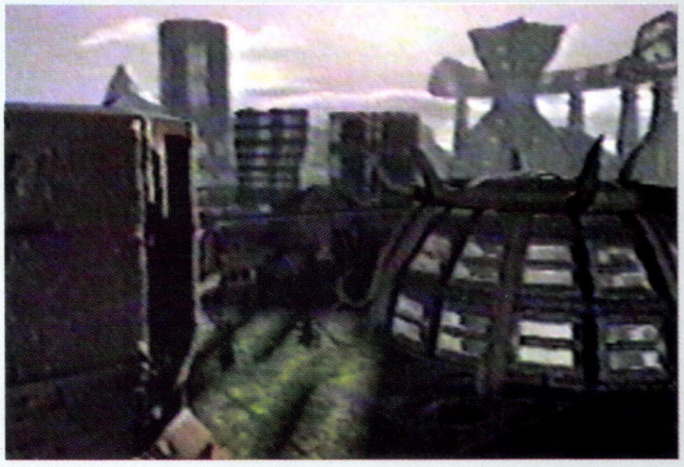


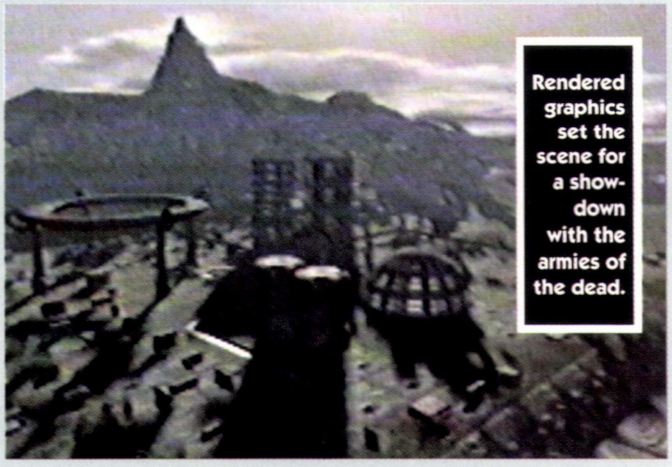




Creepy castles house the dead guys.







Rendered graphics set the scene for a showdown with the armies of the dead.

attack. Random presses of your sword button just aren't good enough.

The creepy soundtrack suits the action perfectly, with a nice mixture of eerie music and somber sound effects. Each level has its own distinctive theme, creating a very specific atmosphere for you to play within.

So you could level some criticism at this game. Apart from the gory graphics and the special effects, what does this game really achieve? Well, the fact is that we already liked this kind of game a whole lot a long time before 32-bit technology arrived and we still like this kind of game. If the development of Skeleton Warriors continues to improve, this could be a classic to rank up there with the likes of Rastan Saga and **Shinobi**. And the amazing thing is that it has better graphics and a better pedigree than either of those two games.

So, put on your leathers and your armor, pop a crucifix round your neck and let's head down to the graveyard, where there are zombies waiting to be killed.

—Frank O'Connor



Skeleton guy.

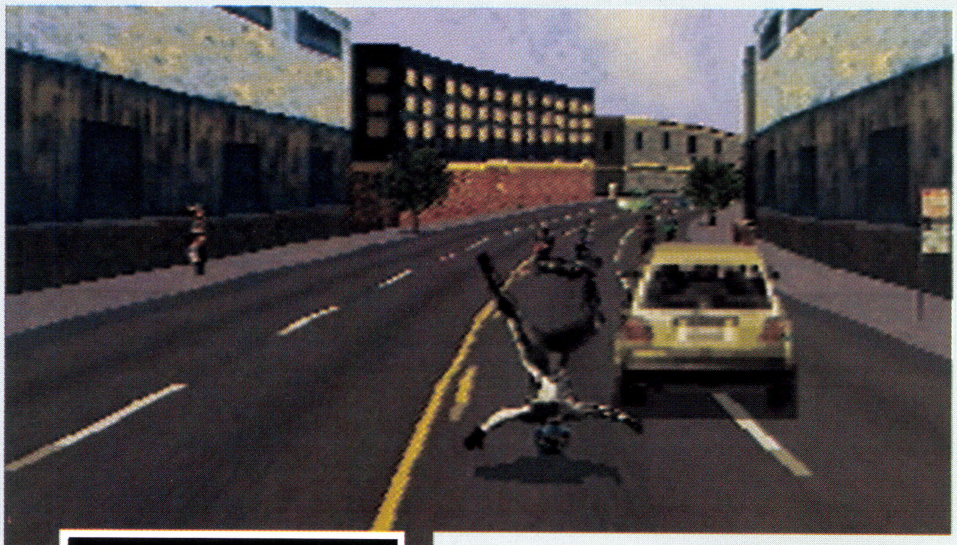




INFO

Game:	Skeleton Warriors
Format:	Sega Saturn
Publisher:	PlayMates
Game Style:	Platform
Completion Status:	80%
Release date:	TBA
Price:	$50

ROAD RASH



Unless he's breakdancing in this picture, I think our hero is probably in quite a lot of trouble.

Road Rash was one of the all-time greats for the Sega Genesis. Its combination of (at the time) incredible graphics, cool motorbikes and violent gameplay made it one of the biggest Genesis games ever. That success was emulated on a smaller scale when the vastly improved 3DO version arrived. Wonderful graphics and far more detail—an exceptionally attractive game.

The Play Station is, of course, far more powerful in the 3-D department than the 3DO, so you'd think that Electronic Arts would take advantage of this power and increase the visual appeal of the PlayStation version. Well, to a certain extent they have, but for some reason, the game still looks remarkably like the 3DO game. The graphics are sharper and more detailed and the frame rate is almost doubled. These are all dramatic enhancements indeed, but they just don't make it look that much better.



One thing that has improved is the control system. Basically, the PlayStation control pad is far more suited to this kind of thing than the 3DO pad ever was. The bike responds faster, the fighting is easier to manage and the whole feel of the game is improved as a result.



High speed fighting, anyone?

The gameplay has remained intact and unchanged, though. You have to try and finish the race first, by fair means or foul. Different racers are out to get you, and they all have very distinctive styles of fighting and racing. You'll soon realize that it's almost impossible to complete a race without at least crippling one of your opponents. Being the fastest simply isn't good enough.

Speed helps though, and to that end you can upgrade your motorcycle by winning races and earning the money required to buy some new wheels. Once you get hold of the fastest, most expensive bike, you'll be pretty much unbeatable, but getting to that point is the hard part. Road Rash is a big, challenging and ultimately thrilling racing game and would be a classic on any platform, PlayStation or 3DO.

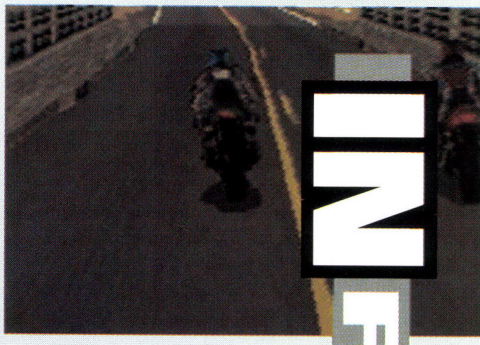
—Frank O'Connor

STRENGTHS

- Classic Road Rash action
- Smoother graphics
- Nice soundtrack

WEAKNESSES

- ESPN got there first
- Looks like the 3DO version
- Tricky controls



INFO

Game:	Road Rash
Format:	Sony PlayStation
Publisher:	Electronic Arts
Game Style:	Racing
Completion Status:	85%
Release date:	TBA
Price:	$50

SCREAMER



Is this the PC's answer to RIDGE RACER? Certainly looks that way, doesn't it?



Speed and detail are all-important in the modern racing game and SCREAMER has both in spades.

PC owners may at last rejoice, because now they can call up their PlayStation-owning pals and say, "I have a game that looks and plays almost as well as **Ridge Racer**—and I can play **Doom** and you can't".

Of course, the PlayStation player will immediately pipe up, "Bugger off. I have Ridge Race, which is a bit faster and more playable than **Screamer**—and Doom on the PlayStation is better than Doom on the PC.

"Oh, it is is it?" the PC owner will reply, "I bet you can't do your accounts or plot star-system positions on your stoopid PlayStation, can you?"

"Nor would I want to, you specky-four-eyed geek" comes the reply, "You can take your PC, your soundcard and your hideously complicated system and stick 'em where the sun don't shine"

Although this conversation is pointless and will no doubt end in tragedy, it does highlight the lack of action racers on the PC. Screamer addresses this rather glaring omission from the PC games catalog and goes a long way to fixing the problem. It's a beautifully fast and detailed (on an adequate PC, that is) racing game, very much in the vein of Ridge Racer and to a lesser extent, **The Need For Speed**. The soundtrack, graphics and general presentation of the game are very, very reminiscent of the new generation of consoles and suit the proceeding to a tee. This is gonna be big.

—Frank O'Connor



STRENGTHS

- Smooth, colorful graphics
- Console-style playability
- Groovy music

WEAKNESSES

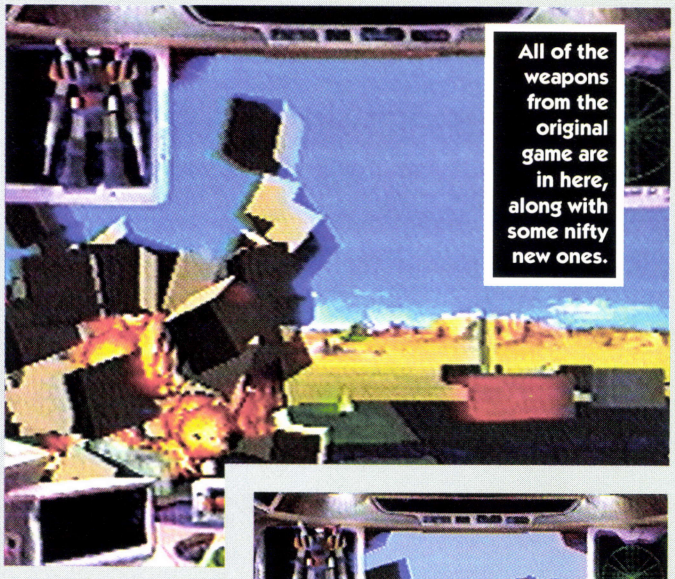
- Skewed a little young
- Simplistic controls
- Lack of realism



INFO

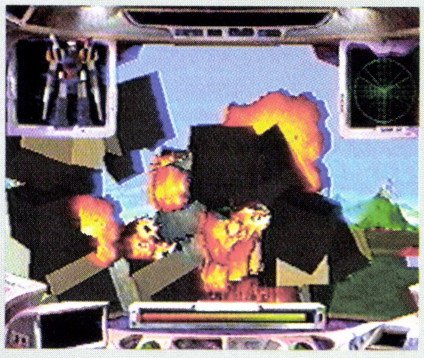
Game:	Screamer
Format:	PC CD-ROM
Publisher:	Virgin Games
Game Style:	Racing
Completion Status:	80%
Release date:	TBA
Price:	TBA

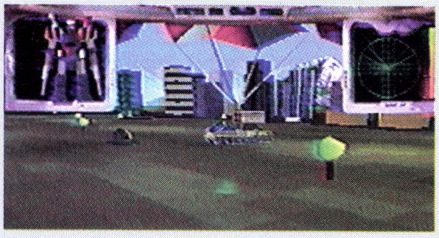
IRON SOLDIER 2


All of the weapons from the original game are in here, along with some nifty new ones.

Although it was no groundbreaker, **Iron Soldier** for the Jaguar was one of the more playable titles to appear on the system since its creation. The concept of controlling a 42-foot tall mech is just too cool to ignore. The first game was a success, so it seemed like it would only be a matter of time until a sequel was developed.

Iron Soldier II takes what works and adds to it in an effort to open even more wallets. The evil bastards at the Iron Fist Corporation have regrouped and pose an even greater threat to humanity. Being the hero that you are, you hop aboard your I.S. 'mech to head off the baddies through some 16 levels. This time around, you've got some new tricks up your sleeves. Say hello to the enemy by launching a Ferret homing missile into their fat heads or send a message to back off with your Carlisle 75mm chain guns. It doesn't matter—just make those jerks pay.

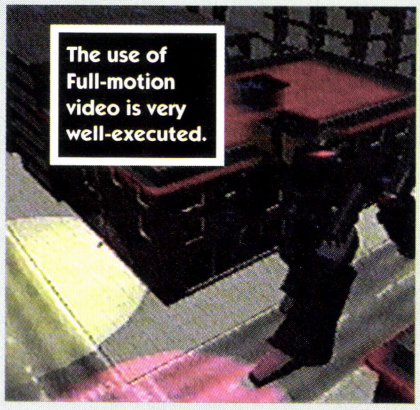


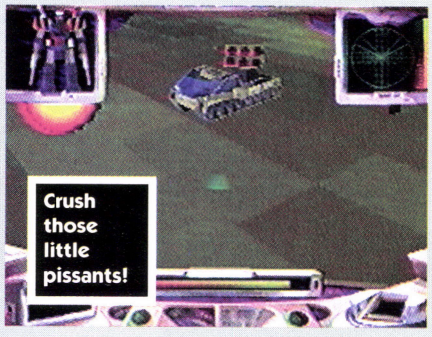


There are several all-new enemies in Iron Soldier II. Two-legged "Satyr" war striders (similar to the small AT-Ts seen in **The Empire Strikes Back**) and "Roc" transport planes have been programmed to drop you like a fly. All are very impressive-looking and were animated using the same liquid-smooth rotoscoping techniques used in the first game.

Iron Soldier II should offer some CPR to a rather lifeless Jaguar game library.

—Jim Loftus


The use of Full-motion video is very well-executed.


Crush those little pissants!

STRENGTHS

- FMV cinemas look great
- Improved texture-mapping
- New rotoscoped enemies

WEAKNESSES

- The game should look more like the FMV sequences
- Almost every level looks the same



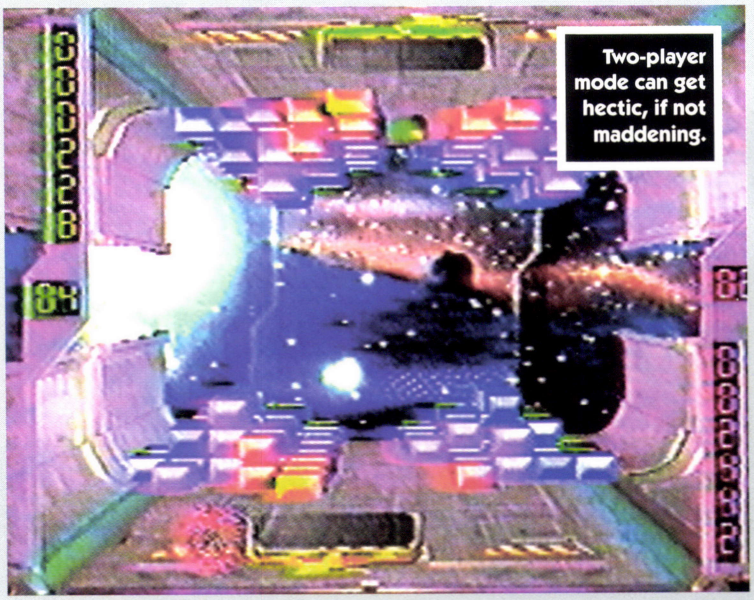




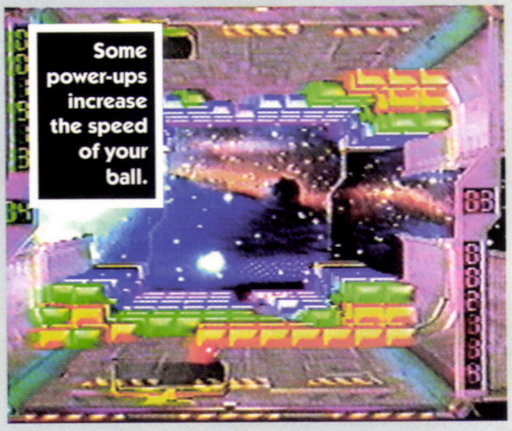
INFO

Game:	Iron Soldier II
Format:	Jaguar
Publisher:	Atari
Game Style:	First-person shooter
Completion Status:	60%
Release date:	January
Price:	$59.95

BREAKOUT 2000


Two-player mode can get hectic, if not maddening.


The new futuristic playfield of BREAKOUT 2000 looks pretty good.


Some power-ups increase the speed of your ball.

Hey, you guys—screw innovation, let's just '2000' everything to death!" must've been the command handed down from top brass at Atari sometime last year. And with **Tempest 2000** sales figures still going off the chart, it's not hard to picture that scenario, much less blame them.

Who doesn't remember **Breakout**? Previous (or current) Atari 2600 owners will be the first ones to admit that at one time, the game was every bit as addictive as **Tetris**. An evolutionary form of **Pong**, the game involved hitting balls against multi-colored walls of bricks and was a humongous hit back in the late '70s. Back then, all that mattered was getting the highest score possible.

Fortunately for gaming, it's a whole different story now. **Breakout 2000** places you in a 3/4-view, 3-D, racquetball-style playfield. Slam the living bejeezus out of multiple layers of colored bricks by volleying a ball into them. Power-ups are hidden inside some of the bricks and, when found, will aid you in your efforts to tear down the wall. In the two-player mode, when one player eliminates a brick, that brick is then sent to your enemy's playfield. The first gamer to clear his or her screen of bricks wins.

Breakout 2000 looks to be a winner, but let's not lose sight of one very important fact: Not all retro-games can be dug up from the grave and resurrected as successfully as this. I'm a firm believer in the notion that there is no exact, scientific, catch-all formula to creating a mega-hit game title—it's just not that cut-and-dried. Some people, Shigeru Miyamoto for instance, possess intangible, magical talents that simply cannot be bottled. It's easy to see how game developers can grow complacent, sit back, and rely on past glories, but with any luck, we gamers won't suffer in the process. Here's hoping Breakout 2000 comes out with all guns-a-blazing.

—Jim Loftus

STRENGTHS

- Retro-gaming is alive and well
- Over 50 levels
- Two-player simultaneous action

WEAKNESSES

- Flogging a dead horse is pointless
- Could be more intense
- Paddle controllers are needed



INFO

Game:	Breakout 2000
Format:	Jaguar
Publisher:	Atari
Game Style:	Action
Completion Status:	80%
Release date:	December
Price:	$49.95

Is the PlayStation POWERED BY namco?



Nintendo may well be the largest games company in the world right now, but it used to be Namco. and if Masaya Nakamura has anything to do with it, Namco will be number one again. Certainly in terms of software publishing at least. The company was formed in 1955 by Mr. Nakamura and at that time it was called Nakamura Manufacturing Ltd. Namco sounds catchier.

Like many Japanese gaming companies, Namco original started out by manufacturing novelty machines for arcades and department stores. Its very first product as a company was a rocking-horse ride installed on the roof of a Yokohama department store. This rooftop motif was continued in 1963 when

Namco built another one on a store in the Nihombashi district of Tokyo. It wasn't long before their rocking horse-related talents were spotted by outside sources and soon the mighty Disney company came knocking at the door.

Namco's development and production departments started manufacturing characters for Disney's own rides and in 1972, the company finally adopted Namco as a brand name. This was to mark not only a change in name, but a complete change in direction for the company.

In 1974, the company made the most influential acquisition in its history, by purchasing the Japanese arm of Atari. Although the company was almost brand new, Namco felt that the brand name and current product developments were extremely valuable. They were right. In 1977 Namco launched, to massive acclaim and success, a clay pigeon-shooting game called **Shoot Away**. you can still find the damn thing in arcades up and down the country. Almost every travelling fair appears to have one in the back corner of the arcade.



The success of the Shoot Away machine led to further investment and research into video gaming as a concept and, in 1978, Namco unveiled **Gee Bee**. Although a wholly unremarkable game in itself, Gee Bee introduced concepts and technologies which were later to be found in something called **Galaxian**, a game that founded Namco's success in the video game market.

Galaxian "borrowed" a lot of ideas from **Space Invaders**, but arcade purists will tell you with a strange sparkle in their eyes, that Galaxian is possibly the greatest and most influential shoot-'em-up of all time. For one thing, it was color. Space Invaders may look similar, but it was very drab in comparison. Galaxian was a riot of color for those days. It also introduced proper intelligence to bad guys. Admittedly they swooped down in very simple patterns, but this slight improvement was enough to ensure its success as a gameplay classic. Every vertically scrolling game since, from **Xevious** to **Gunhed**, has borrowed elements and style from Galaxian. Namco reworked the Galaxian concept itself in a couple of sequels, and trivia fans will already be aware that **Starblade** is set in the Galaxian "universe", albeit a vastly improved and visually advanced one.

The success in the arcades led Namco to experiment in other fields, and a range of toys found some success in japanese stores. Galaxian was huge, but even Namco was not prepared for the success that a voracious yellow blob would bring the company at the end of 1980. That blob was **Pac-Man** and it would prove to be one of the most important characters of the 1980s and certainly the most important character in video-game history.

"The success of Pac-Man opened a lot of corporate eyes"

Pac-Man even had his own disease. It was called Pac-Man Fever and it took on epidemic proportions for a couple of years in the early eighties. There was a pop song, a candy bar, a soft drink and just about every form of related merchandising you could think of. To this day, fully grown men are still wearing Pac-Man underwear. Why? We'll never know, but the success of the Pac-Man coin-op opened a lot of corporate eyes to the potential of video game manufacture and licensing.

Sequels and spin-offs made Namco an awful lot of money. Ms. Pac-Man was almost as popular as the original game and the much more recent Pac-Land is still one of the most playable platform games ever made. But from a gamer's perspective, one of the things Namco did more than any other company of the time was include little secrets. These weren't hidden the way many game secrets are now, but were treats and bonuses that the game would award you should you advance sufficiently. Namco didn't invent the cheat, but they went a long way towards defining it.

The next big success that Namco had was **Pole Position**. It was the father of the modern driving

game. The three-quarter perspective and track movement were "borrowed" from Atari's own **Night Driver**, but Pole Position at the time was a graphical tour de force. The color graphics, smooth track movement and scrolling horizon were incredibly impressive in 1982 and still don't look all that bad now.

This revolution in the arcades was further enhanced by the introduction of **Xevious** in 1983. I remember seeing Xevious for the first time when I was still a kid and I actually dropped my ice cream. It was the first time I had ever seen graphics on a video game that actually looked like something other than video-game graphics. The aliens looked like they were made of metal, the grass looked like grass and the spinning mirrors looked like...well they looked like blocks of lead, but it was still impossibly impressive.

It was also quite complicated. You had lasers and bombs and you had to deal with two distinctly different types of bad guy. The ones on the ground and the ones in the air. Xevious also contained a ton of cheats and hidden bonuses. Truly revolutionary stuff, but strangely, Xevious never enjoyed anything like the success of Galaxian and Pac-Man.







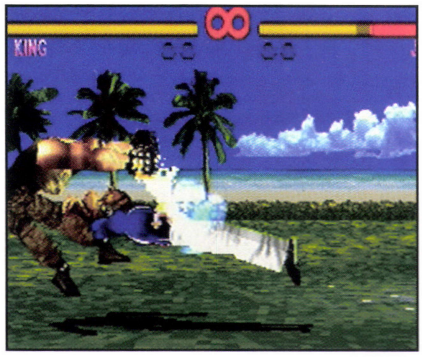
Xevious was to prove Namco's last big arcade product for a while. A new force was emerging in the games industry, driven by a small company called Nintendo. In 1984, when the NES (Famicom in Japan) was first unveiled, Namco was a very much larger organization than Nintendo, but the company saw the advantages of publishing their games for the home system and signed on as one of Nintendo's first licensees. This agreement was to prove profitable and painful for Namco as a corporation, and would eventually lead to disaster.

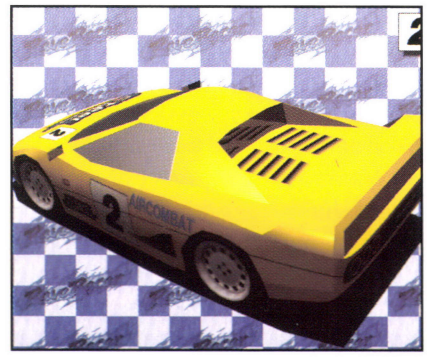
The NES sold huge volumes in Japan and since Namco was producing some of the best games for the system, the company was making a fortune. Nintendo's licensing policies were to prove too stringent for Namco however, and eventually the relationship floundered. Namco and a number of other software companies felt that they were being treated unfairly and charged too much for the production of Nintendo cartridges.

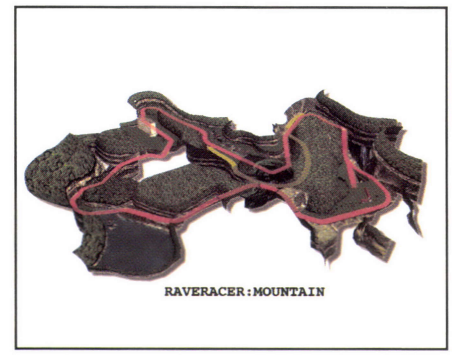
Although these issues were felt throughout the Japanese industry, the repercussions were aimed squarely at Namco, and for quite some time there was animosity as well as legal wrangling between the two companies. Although the relationship with Nintendo has been smoothed over since then, these disagreements between Japanese companies are not easily forgotten. It is testament to the quality of Namco's product that it even has a working relationship with Nintendo at all now.

The problems Namco encountered with Nintendo have caused countless repercussions, including a slightly over-dramatic retelling of the tale in **Game Over**, a book chronicling the rise of Nintendo by David Scheff. The book tells how Mr. Nakamura had to make a grovelling apology to Nintendo regarding his non-compliance with Nintendo's licensing arrangements. Since those times, Namco has actually gone from strength to strength. Success in the Nintendo publishing field allowed it greater expansion, including a chain of "Italian Tomato Restaurants", basically Spaghetti houses, which were extremely popular at the time.









The correlation between video game companies and restaurants appears to be unavoidable. The Chuck. E. Cheese chain of restaurants was conceived and owned by one Nollan Bushnell, the man who founded Atari. It looks like some kind of weird pattern is developing here, but Namco was apparently never tempted to introduce dancing robots into its restaurant activities.

Namco's next big arcade hit didn't come until 1987, when it launched **Final Lap**, a phenomenally popular racing game which again advanced the standard of arcade graphics. The fact that two machines could be linked together for head-to-head racing further enhanced the game's longevity and it can still be found in many arcades. Final Lap was in a way a precursor to the 3-D technology that would bring Namco to the forefront of video games yet again.

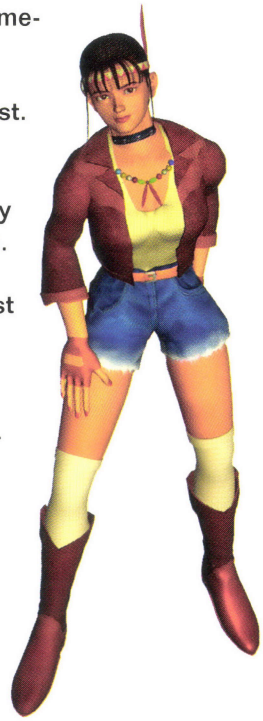
In 1989 Namco unveiled **Winning Run**, a graphically spectacular racing game featuring incredibly smooth polygons. Although it never achieved anything like the same level of success, this was technically very close to Sega's **Virtua Racing**, a game that didn't appear in arcades until much later. The graphics may have been ahead of their time, and so it seemed was the gameplay. Although big in Japan, it never really won hearts in the West. Undeterred however, Namco continued to invest time and money in 3-D game research. What was to follow was one of the biggest revelations in arcade history: **Starblade**.

As a game, Starblade was incredibly simple. It was the most basic of shoot-'em-ups, but the speed and fluidity of the polygons, combined with a brilliant soundtrack ensured, that the game was a smash hit in arcades all over the world. Elements from Starblade, including the musical score, can be seen in the heavily influenced **Starfox**.

Namco followed up on Starblade with a couple of unremarkable coin-ops, but outdid itself with the stunning **Galaxian 3**. Set in the same universe as Galaxian, it featured fully texture-mapped polygon graphics, multi-player gameplay and a totally cinematic atmosphere.

Namco now makes most of its money from arcade games and arcade chains. The company is among the largest operators of video-game arcades in the world, and actually owns several different chains.

Among the most popular of its Japanese game arcades are NamcoLand, Play City Carrot and the fabulously titled Play Field Plids. These arcades are operated solely in Japan, but Namco also runs a couple over here in the States, with a







particularly large Cyber Station being its show piece in San Francisco.

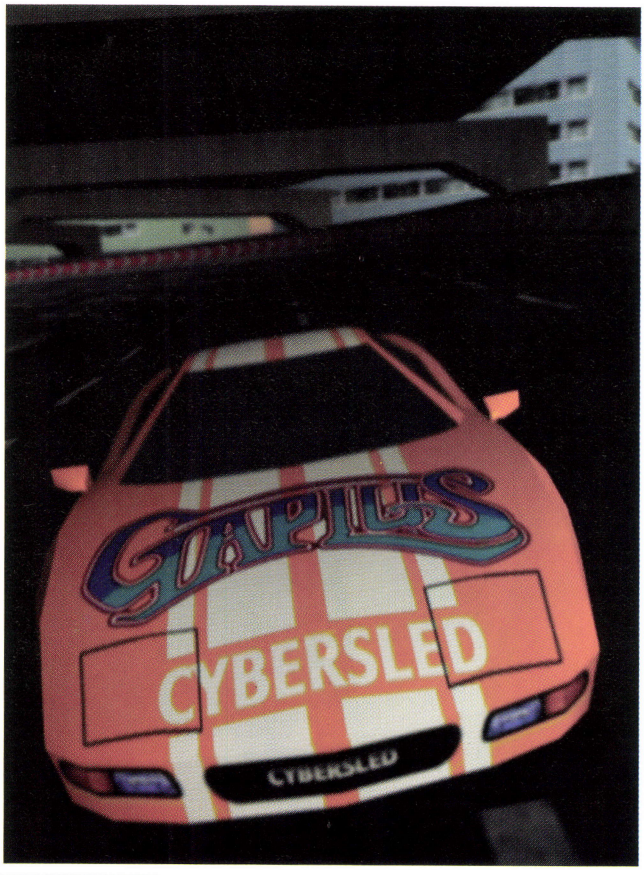
The arcades are clean and professionally run, something of a novelty outside of Japan. But Namco has bigger fish to fry. Its theme park "Wonder Eggs" features themed rides based on many of Namco's video-game and original characters. One of our writers, who actually visited the Wonder Eggs park, described it as "a complete trip, dude."

Namco has always enjoyed publishing software though, so its focus has shifted slightly in the last couple of years. Arcade development ties in perfectly with game publishing and Namco has taken this theory one step further.

Its new arcade technology, entitled "System 22" is based around the Sony PlayStation's R3000 hardware. Namco firmly believes that 3-D graphics are the future of gaming technology and at the moment, they and Sega are the undisputed leaders in the field.

Ridge Racer definitely put Namco on the 3-D map, with super fast, colorful graphics, matched with seamless arcade-style gameplay. The conversion to PlayStation was as inevitable as it was excellent. Ridge Racer, more than any other single title, has been responsible for the success of the PlayStation in Japan. Namco had been working with Sony very closely, right up until the launch of the machine, and the licensing of the System 22 technology seemed like a logical step. The first fruit of this labor was a game called **Tekken**, now widely acclaimed as one of the best fighting games of all time.

For Namco to make progress in a market dominated by Sega, SNK and Capcom was a coup. For it to actually improve on elements held dear by those companies was nothing short of a miracle.



Tekken featured large 3-D characters, very much like those seen in Virtua Fighter, only this time they were fully texture-mapped and had a far more intuitive fighting system. The conversion to PlayStation was flawless. Actually, conversion is a pretty useless term to use in this respect, since the game was actually ported from the System 22 hardware to the PlayStation hardware with almost no effort. The same will hold true for **Tekken 2**, a game currently being moved from the arcades to the PlayStation. The conversion is taking a while, but you can expect to see the home version released before Summer in 1996.



Tekken 2 features very similar, and in some ways superior, gameplay to the first title, but with vastly improved graphics, more characters and even more moves for the original fighters. It's a huge hit in arcades at the moment, ironically buoyed by the success of the PlayStation version.

One other project Namco is very proud of is **Rave Racer**, the logical successor to Ridge Racer. This is again a big step up from the original coin-op, with a shockingly smooth 60 frames per second, at even higher resolution than the first game. It has to be seen to be believed. The gameplay is almost identical to Ridge Racer, but the inclusion of a rearview mirror, a greater variety of cars and more importantly, more tracks make this the hottest arcade ticket around.



The big question is this: Will Rave Racer be converted to run on the PlayStation? The answer, fortunately, is yes, but please bear in mind that Rave Racer



does not use System 22 hardware and the PlayStation conversion will suffer in translation.

However, PlayStation fans will be very pleased to hear that a stop-gap sequel to Ridge Racer is currently nearing completion. Although untitled at present, it is being referred to at the moment as "**Ridge Racer New**" or "**Ridge Racer Alpha**" and will contain many of the elements seen in Rave Racer.

There will be more tracks, and certainly more cars. One of the most important additions will be a rearview mirror. Advanced players of PlayStation Ridge Racer will now how important that is. This is currently on the Top Ten Most Wanted List of PlayStation owners all over the world. The first game simply didn't have enough tracks.

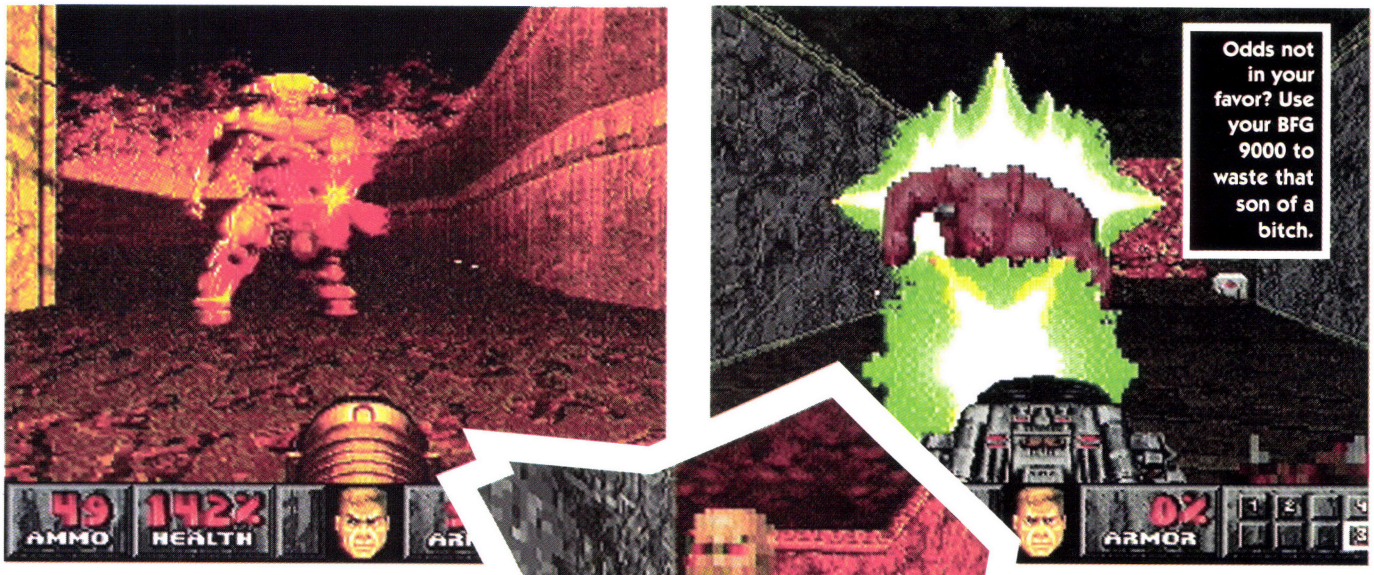
So PlayStation owners seem to be getting the pick of the crop from Namco at the moment, don't they? Well, although Namco has a close relationship with Sony, it's by no means an exclusive deal.

Saturn fans will no doubt be pleased to hear that among the games scheduled for launch on the Sega machine are **Cybersled** and Starblade. At the moment, Ridge Racer and Tekken are PlayStation only, but Namco has announced that Ridge Racer is in development for PC and compatibles. The Saturn simply couldn't handle a conversion of Ridge Racer that would match the PlayStation at least pixel for pixel. Namco probably feel that an inferior conversion would be a negative rather than a positive development. Quite how a PC with no custom hardware can be expected to match the kind of speed needed for this game is also something of a mystery, but if anyone can do it, then Namco probably can.

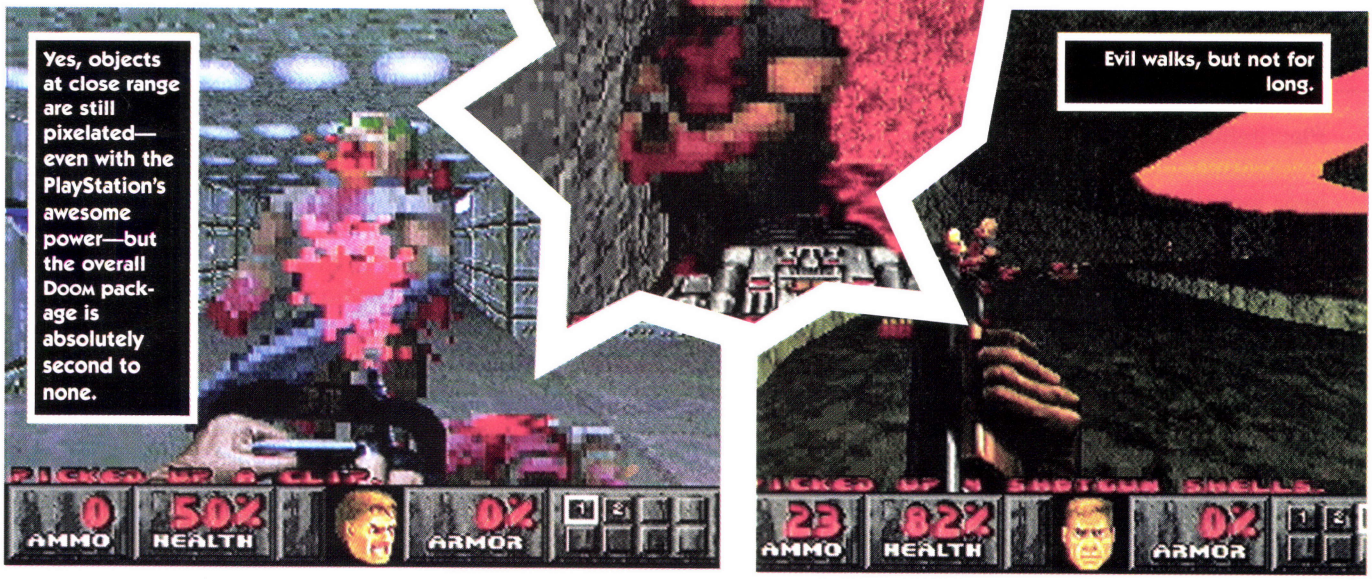
Again, this marks a move away from arcades and into more mainstream sources of revenue. The PC market is expanding and part of that expansion is a greater demand for arcade-style games. no longer is PC gaming the sole domain of strategy and adventure buffs. Nowadays the bestselling games on PC are action-oriented. Take **Doom** and **Descent**, for example. Starblade will also be converted for the PC, a far simpler job than the complex Ridge Racer.

So, as Namco heads into the future, what are its plans? An animation division has been set up, producing TV shows, as well as other projects in synergy with the games division. Namco's research into arcade technology also continues, with developments in 3-D being made every day. This is just the beginning for a company that has always been and will be dedicated to excellence.

DOOM 2

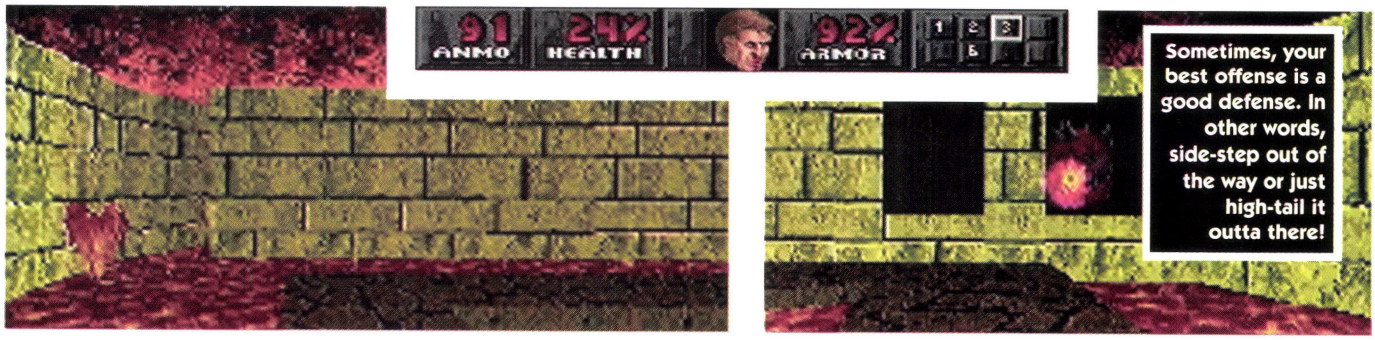


Odds not in your favor? Use your BFG 9000 to waste that son of a bitch.



Yes, objects at close range are still pixelated—even with the PlayStation's awesome power—but the overall Doom package is absolutely second to none.

Evil walks, but not for long.

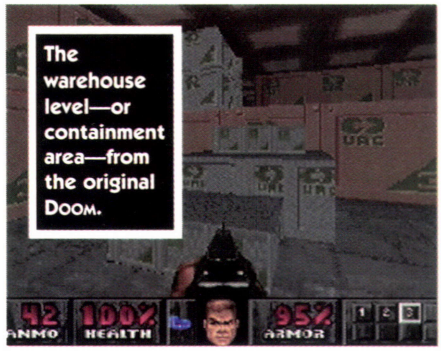


Sometimes, your best offense is a good defense. In other words, side-step out of the way or just high-tail it outta there!







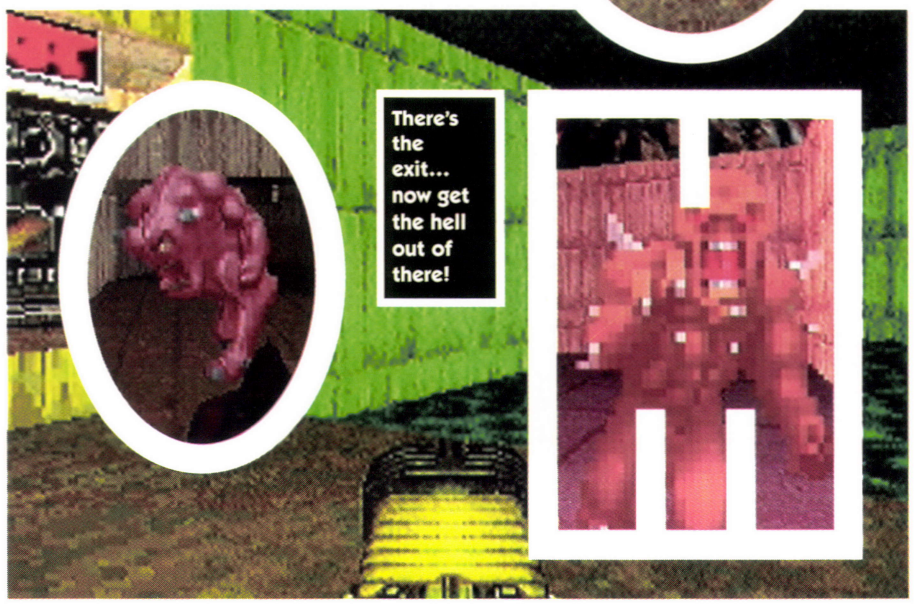




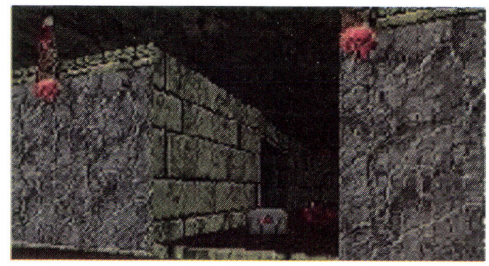
There's nothing like a little death and destruction after a hard day at the office.





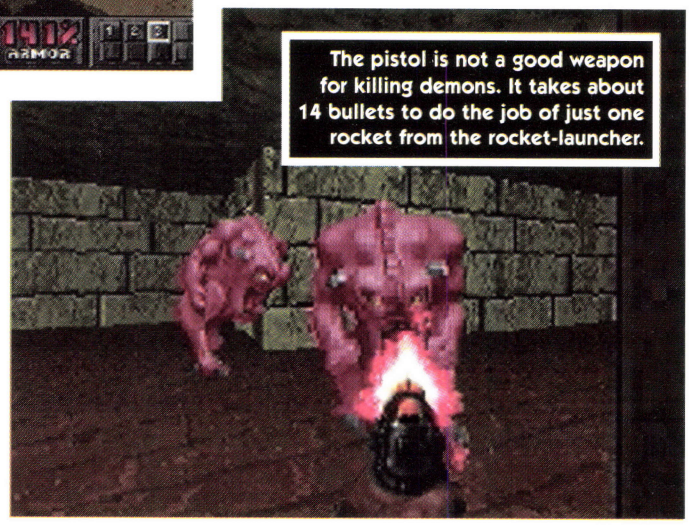






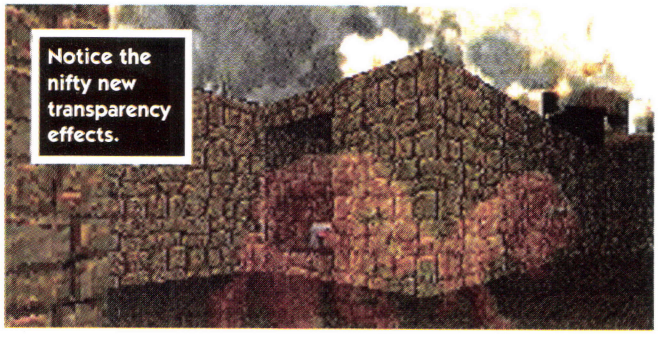
With Pentium-like speed and over 60 levels, this is arguably the best Doom package ever produced. On top of all that, the game includes an incredible soundtrack, two brand new weapons, a never-before-seen final boss and unique environmental enhancements.



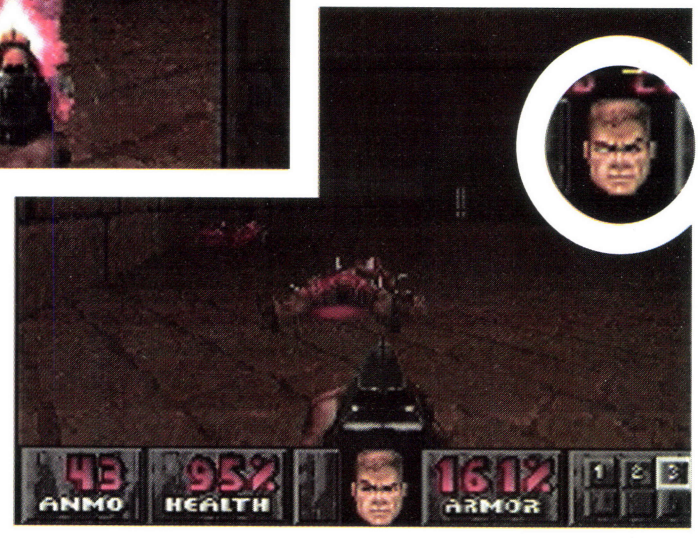


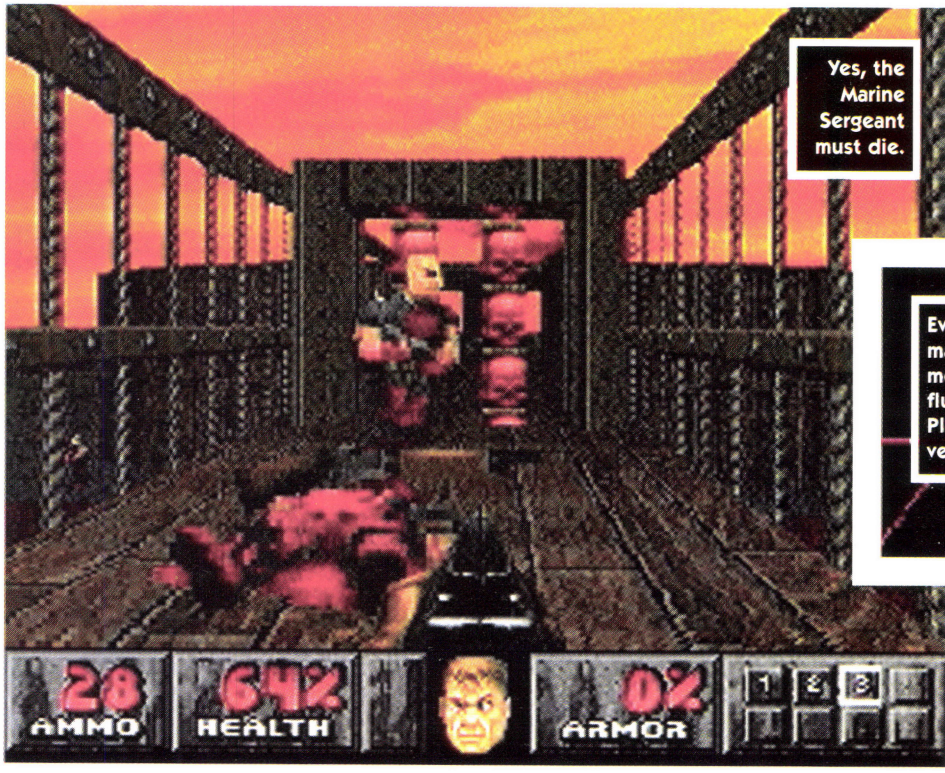
The pistol is not a good weapon for killing demons. It takes about 14 bullets to do the job of just one rocket from the rocket-launcher.



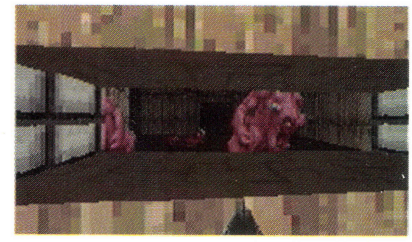


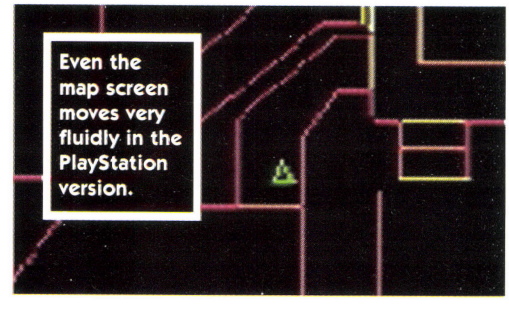
Notice the nifty new transparency effects.





Yes, the Marine Sergeant must die.





Even the map screen moves very fluidly in the PlayStation version.





The gaming world is currently being "Doomed" to death. But that's actually good news. Last year, if you wanted a decent version of Doom, you needed to own a PC or Jaguar; otherwise, you were pretty much screwed (the 32X version just plain sucked). Almost every system on the planet is now offering Doom in one form or another: Jaguar, 32X, Mac, Super NES, 3DO and now (YES!) PlayStation.

"PlayStation Doom will blow you away...period."

All versions of the monster hit have been jam-packed onto one CD. That's right; **Doom**, **Doom II: Hell on Earth** and **Ultra Doom** are all in here. But wait—it doesn't stop there—you also get two brand-spankin' new levels!

By far the grandest version of Doom available for play on any system—PC or non-PC—PlayStation Doom will blow you away... period. Not only does the game run every bit as fast as the fastest Pentium PC, but in utilizing the upscaled power of the PlayStation, Id Soft has also managed to incorporate a few little graphic enhancements in the process. And while it's not exactly the Doom we might expect on say, the upcoming Ultra 64 or M2 consoles, this is certainly the definitive Doom compilation.

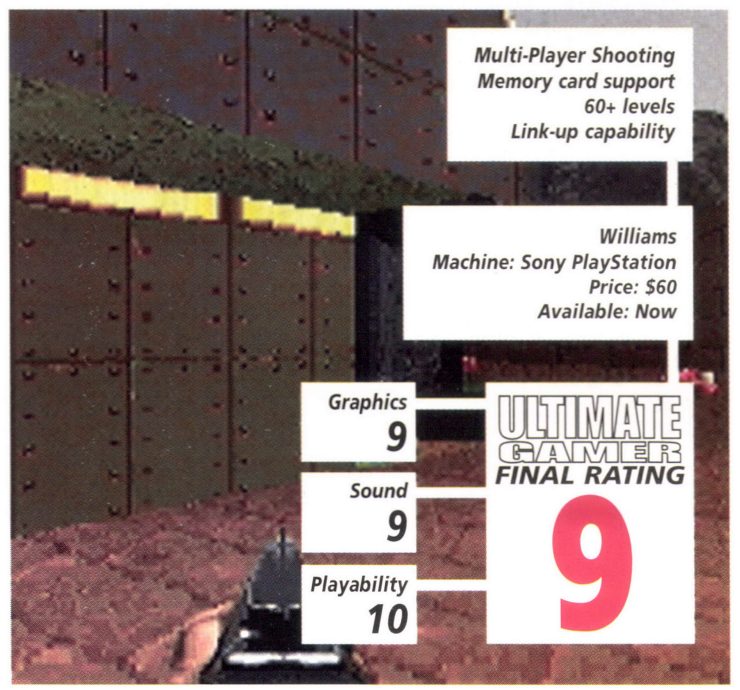
For one thing, all monsters and bosses are present. (even the slick Jag version was lacking in this area) The light-sourcing in most of the levels has been beefed-up to an eye-popping degree of realism as well. One thing that particularly stood out was the sky in one of the later levels—a truly hellish-looking, raging, animated inferno. Sound effects are meatier, too; from gunshots to growls, the audio is absolutely killer. And the music? Let's put it this way: If you've got some high-quality stereo equipment sitting around the house, now's a good time to put it to use. The tunes are all new, extremely atmospheric and fit the game to a tee. To top it all off, the game includes both Co-op and Deathmatch Modes. In other words, grab a link-cable and get ready to rock.

First **Ridge Racer**, then **Toshinden**, then **MK 3** and now this. Just when you thought owning a PlayStation couldn't get any better! Man, it's good to be alive!

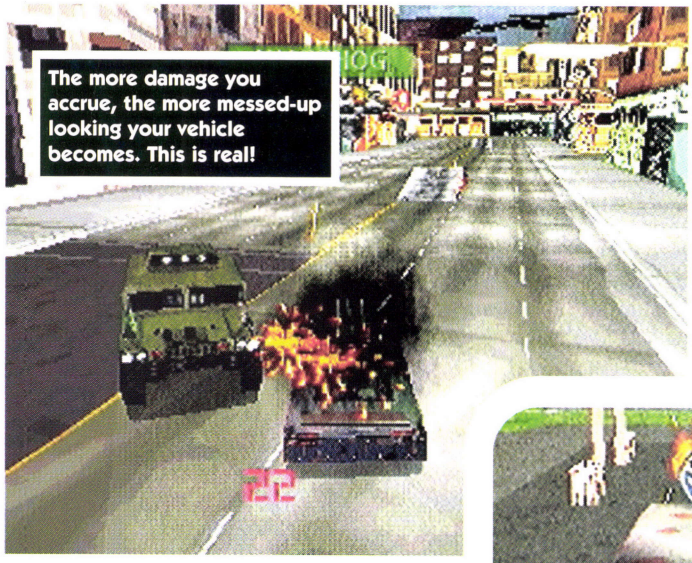
Jim Loftus

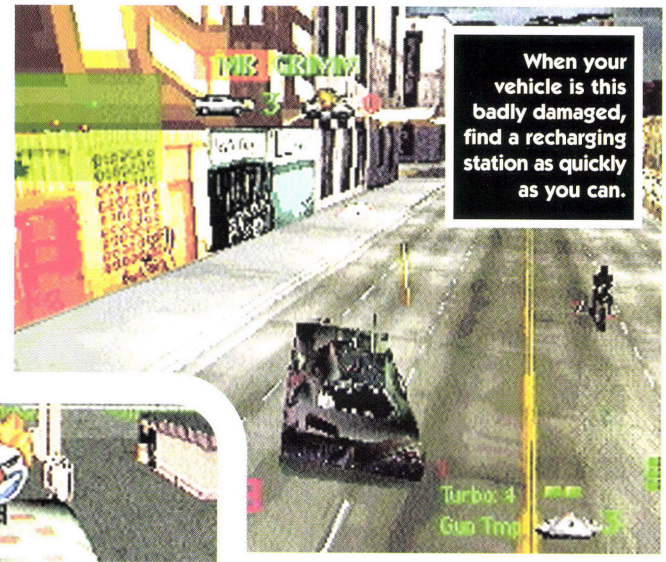




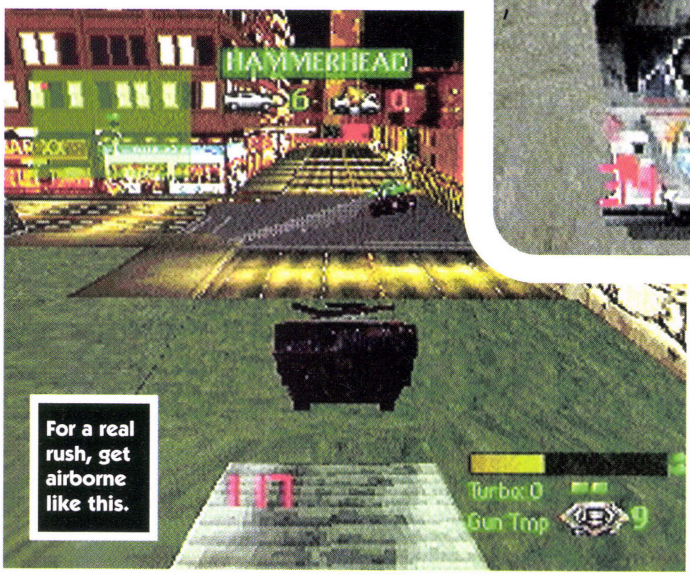


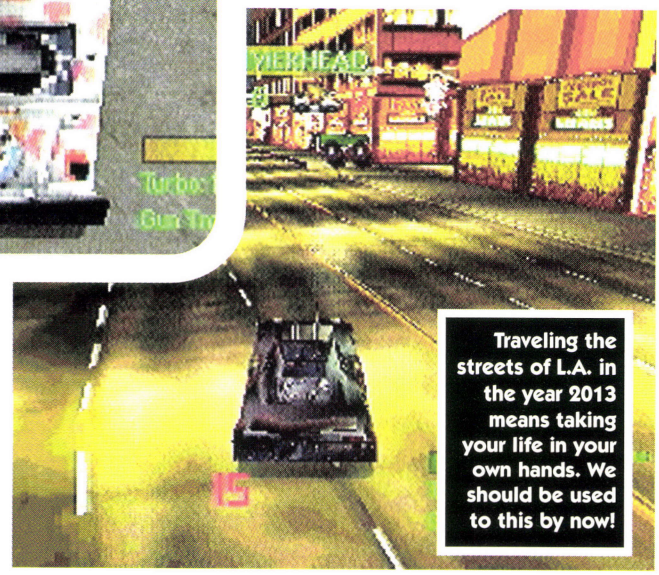
TWISTED METAL





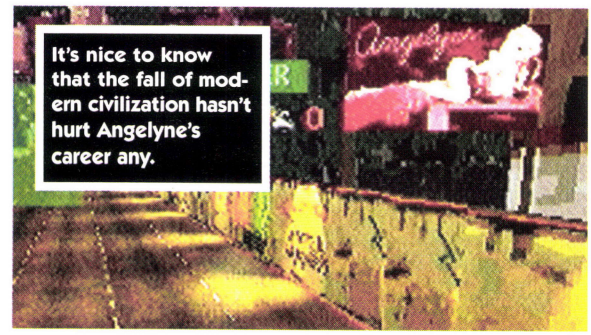












From the very minute it starts, it's evident that TWISTED METAL is something special. Providing hours of pure, unadulterated entertainment is what the game does best. Who could possibly argue with that?



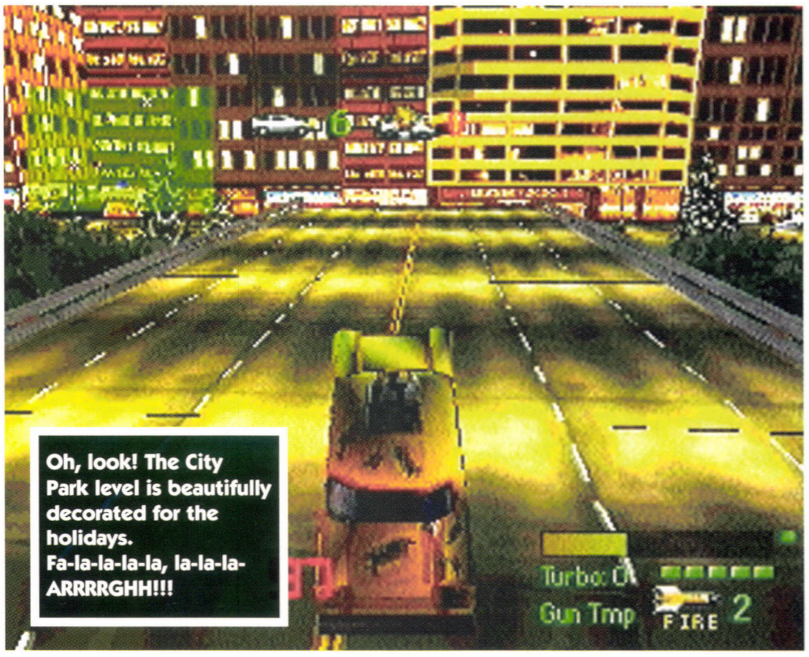
Witness Road Kill in high-speed pursuit of Mr. Grimm, renegade biker. The game's biggest draw is its very addictive chase-the-bad guy playability.



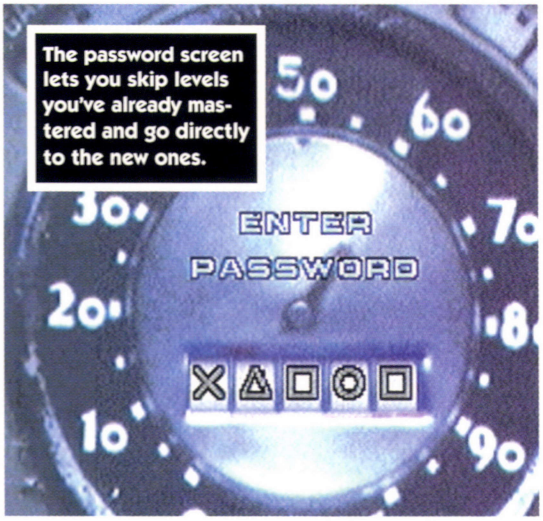
In the City Park level, you can traverse this riverbed...



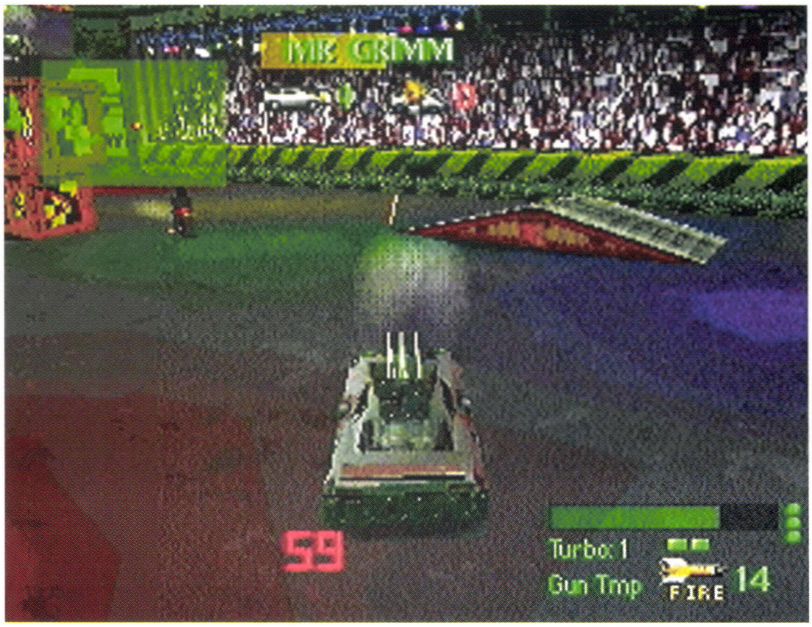
...You can also mow down some christmas trees.

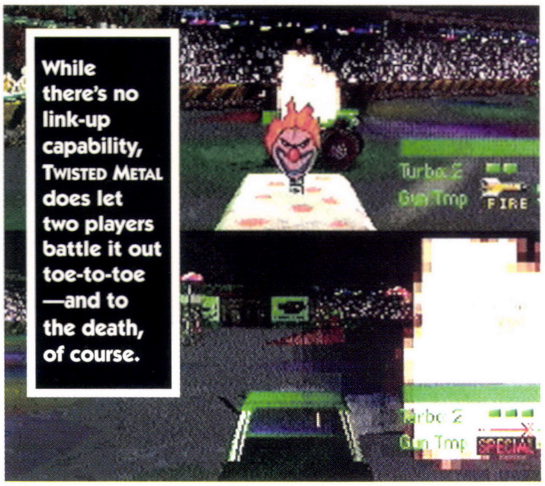


Oh, look! The City Park level is beautifully decorated for the holidays.
Fa-la-la-la-la, la-la-la-ARRRRGHH!!!



The password screen lets you skip levels you've already mastered and go directly to the new ones.





While there's no link-up capability, TWISTED METAL does let two players battle it out toe-to-toe—and to the death, of course.



Crimson Fury



Yellow Jacket



Hammerhead



Mr. Grimm



Outlaw



Pit Viper



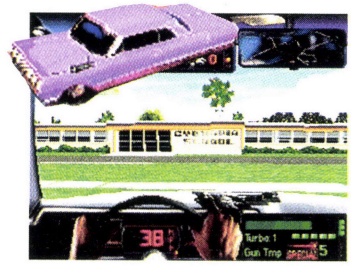
Road Kill



Spectre



Sweet T



Thumper



Warthog



Darkside

Oh, this is good. This is very good. Twisted Metal combines the swiftness of Ridge Racer with the mayhem of a Mad Max flick—and the results are superb.

"This game made me sick!"

You select from 12 seriously twisted-looking (duh) vehicles and jump into a futuristic **Road Warrior**-style environment—Los Angeles, to be exact. The way things have been going in L.A., the game isn't exactly going out on a limb either. To stay alive, you must take out the trash; enemies like Dark Side, Mr. Grimm and Sweet Tooth (our favorite) make life in the future a living hell. Each vehicle has a standard array of weapons plus its own unique "special" weapon. There are three views for the game: Distant, Medium and In-Car. If you're like me, you normally use the "inside car" viewpoint when playing racing games, as it tends to seem more realistic and/or responsive. With T.M. however, it's a bit more difficult to maneuver your car from this angle. That, plus the fact that, instead of providing players with a link option, we're stuck with a two-player, split-screen mode. A Twisted Metal sequel is inevitable, so hopefully, we'll see these oversights corrected.

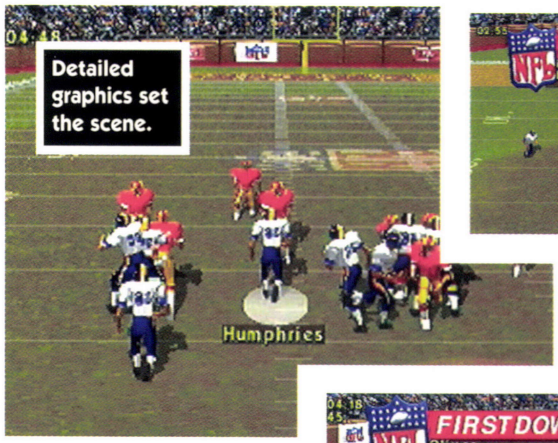
Twisted Metal seems to possess all of the important ingredients for a mega-hit. The game is fast-paced, addictive, varied and most importantly, it's not glued to rails. Sound effects like the diabolical laughter coming from Sweet Tooth's ice-cream truck are truly incredible (they get louder the closer you get to them) and add to the realism—after a while, I wasn't just playing a game, I was living it! The musical score is also mind-boggling; it changes depending on what's happening in the game. For instance, one minute you're cruising along the riverbed to a subdued hard rock ballad. You've finally gotten away from those loonies and you can relax and regroup your thoughts, right? Wrong! All of a sudden, the music changes to a full orchestral, "you will die now" soundtrack—and Dark Side comes flying around the corner, heading straight toward you!

Best of all is the final rooftop confrontation. You battle it out on the top of what seems like a 100-story building. If you're not careful, you can fly off the roof to your death. Here, T.M. affected me to a degree I've never before experienced in a video game. The vertigo caused by careening over the edge made me sick to my stomach. Yeah, I couldn't believe it, either!

Jim Loftus

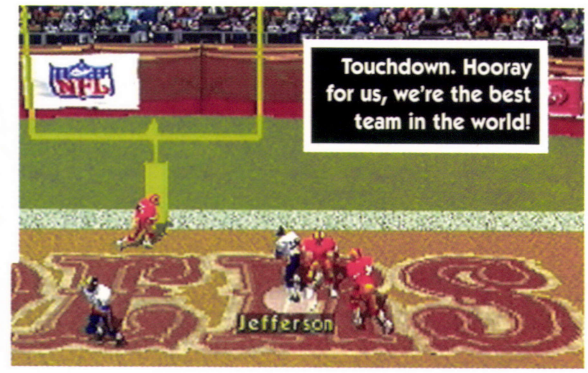


NFL GAMEDAY





The PlayStation's 3-D abilities are put to good use.









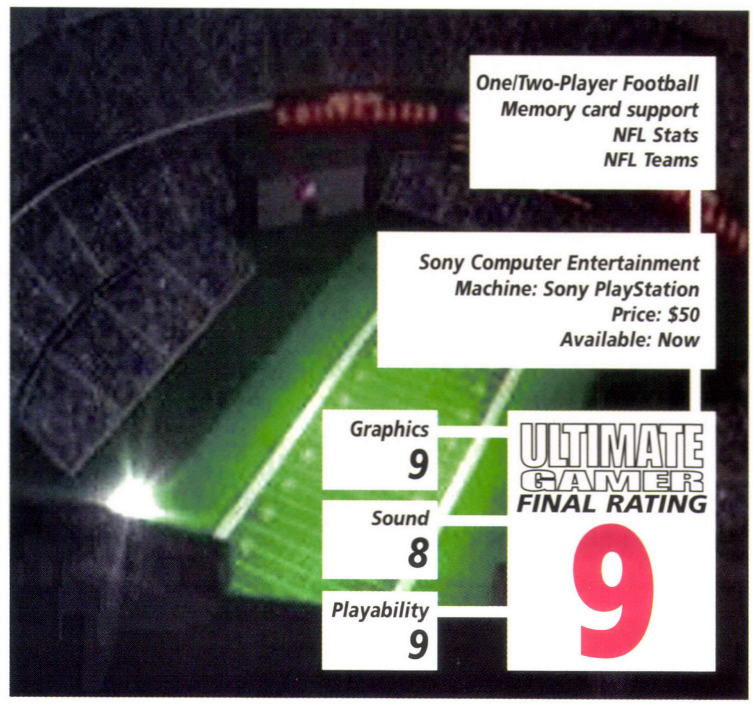
Football season is in full swing as we write this, and the air of excitement is all-pervading. That air of excitement has been further enhanced by the arrival of NFL Gameday from Sony, one of the most playable, complete and attractive sports games we've ever seen.

The presumption that the **Madden** series of games is unbeatable is now severely in question. Graphically, this is a lot better than any of the previous Madden games. The players scale and move convincingly, as does the silky-smooth pitch. The

"The best football game ever?"

play interface is superb, with simple correlation between the PlayStation's button shapes and the actions performed by your team. The sounds and visuals presented on this disc are beyond compare. This, more than any other game, will impress the hardened sports fan who fears computer games. It looks, sounds and feels more like the real thing than a video game ever should.

Frank O'Connor



One/Two-Player Football
Memory card support
NFL Stats
NFL Teams

Sony Computer Entertainment
Machine: Sony PlayStation
Price: $50
Available: Now

Graphics	9
Sound	8
Playability	9

ULTIMATE GAMER FINAL RATING **9**

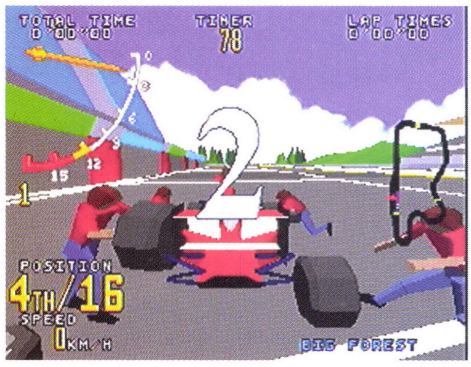
VIRTUA RACING





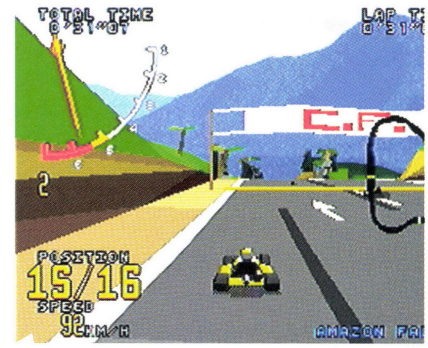


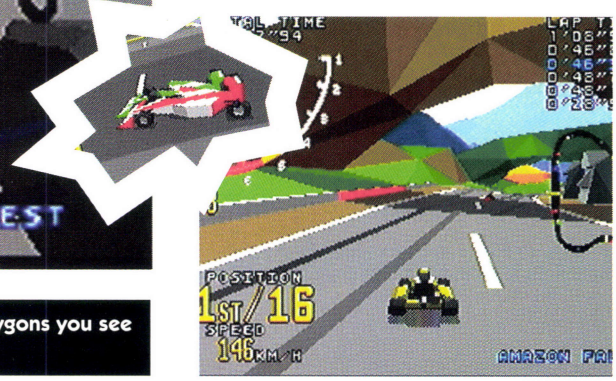






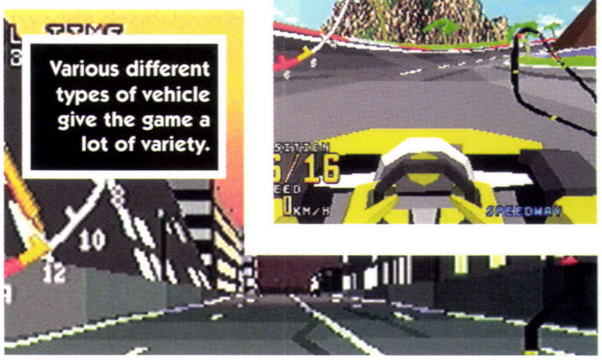
The in-car view is slightly smoother and faster.



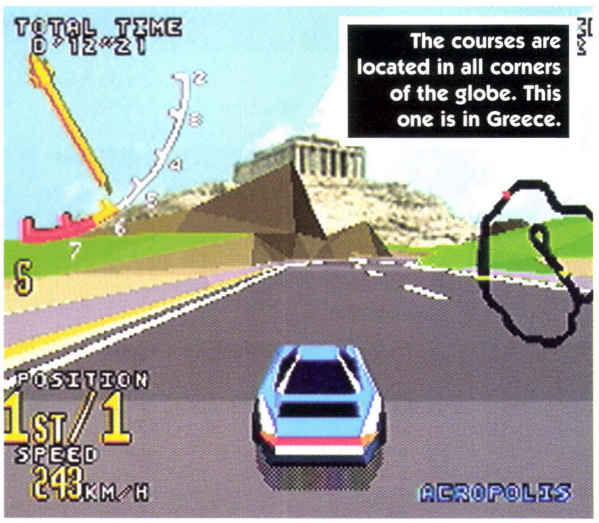


Polygons can be texture-mapped or light-sourced or simply shaded. The polygons you see in VIRTUA RACING are the latter. This means a high frame rate but low detail.









Sega, for some strange reason, gave Time Warner the rights to produce the Saturn version of its own flagship racer, Virtua Racing. Not only is this an odd situation in terms of economics, but also in terms of creativity. Luckily for us, Time Warner has gone off and done a remarkably brilliant job with the conversion.

One of the problems with this title is that it's getting on a bit. Only a couple of short years ago, this was the very pinnacle of arcade gaming technology. Now it looks a little old and dated. Higher frame rates, texture-mapping and light-sourcing have made the flat shaded polygon something of an anachronism. Flat shaded or not, Virtua Racing was always a supremely

"Time Warner shows surprising VIRTUA-osity"

playable racing game. Time Warner really had a hell of a job ahead of itself turning the Saturn version into a playable facsimile of the coin-op. So they didn't do that. They took the basic theme and expanded upon it.

This does contain the whole of the original coin op, with its classic Formula One action and its three different tracks. But to add variety and lifespan to an otherwise short-lived thrill, Time Warner has thrown in more than a few extra tracks, several different types of car and a few little secrets that you'll find out as you play the game.

The graphics are slightly disappointing and can run anywhere from 20 to 30 frames per second. They do look almost identical to the arcade, just not quite as sharp or smooth. What really makes this game shine however, is the inclusion of the involving and exciting Grand Prix mode, allowing you to compete on lots of courses with lots of different cars, starting with go-karts and working your way up to Formula One. Just like a real race drive.

The music is a bit annoying at times, but the sound effects are decent enough to create a convincing sensation of, erm, raciness. If you're looking for glamour and visual appeal, forget it. If you want a challenge, buy it.

Frank O'Connor



One/two-Player Racing
Memory support
Eight tracks
Multiple viewpoints

Time Warner Interactive
Machine: Sega Saturn
Price: $50
Available: Now

Graphics 7
Sound 7
Playability 8

ULTIMATE GAMER *FINAL RATING*

8

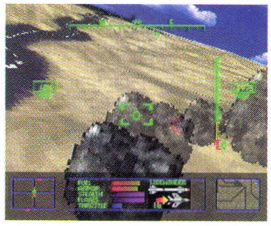
AGILE WARRIOR

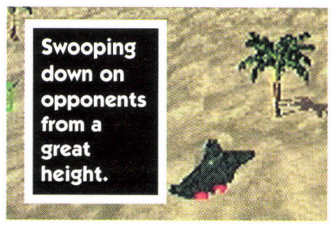




Big explosions are one of AGILE WARRIOR's trademarks, as is a vast playing area.







Swooping down on opponents from a great height.



Flight simulators tend to attract a very specific audience. That's why Black Ops, the designers of Agile Warrior, went for a more action-oriented approach, and to a certain extent they've succeeded. One instance where they haven't been successful is in their choice of control methods.

It seems as if, whenever a new machine comes

"Confusing, but very addictive"

along, game designers feel obliged to use every button on the controller in the most annoying way possible. Agile Warrior is guilty of this. That said, the game is still a great deal of fun to play and the sheer wealth and depth of missions mean it represents fantastic value. A couple of control tweaks here, a little more simplicity there and we could have been talking masterpiece. As it is, this is good stuff.

Frank O'Connor



One-Player Flight Sim
Memory card support
Multiple missions
Multiple viewpoints

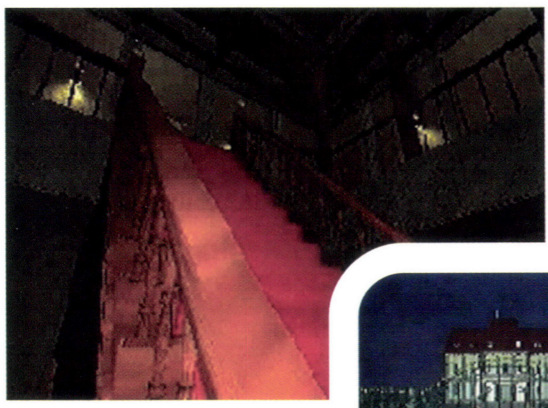
Virgin Interactive
Machine: Sony PlayStation
Price: $49.99
Available: Now

Graphics	6
Sound	7
Playability	7

ULTIMATE GAMER FINAL RATING

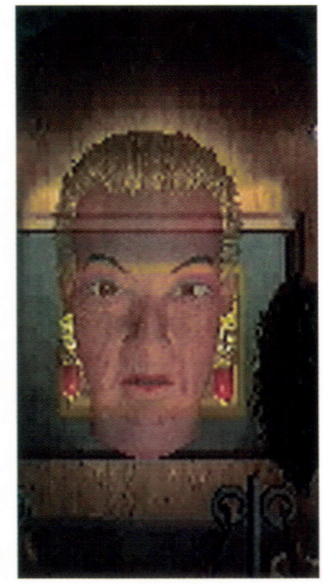
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MANSION OF THE HIDDEN SOULS

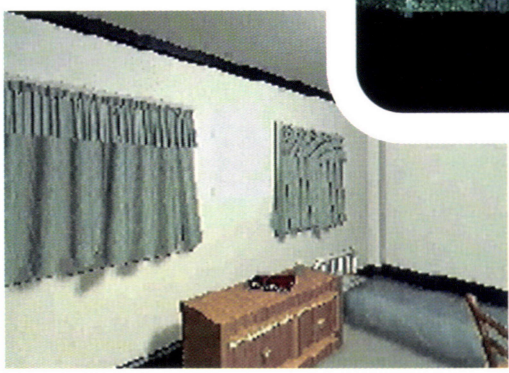


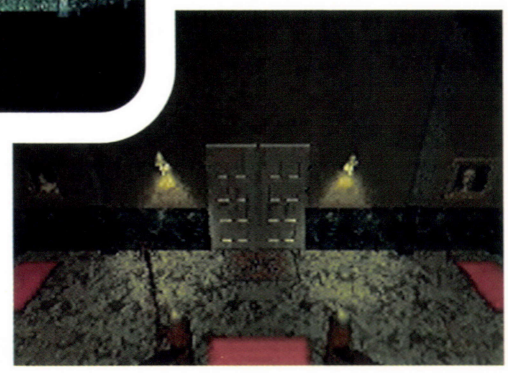


Anyone for a nice game of billiards? No masse shots of course.









Pre-rendered graphic sequences are activated when you trip "switches" throughout the game, such as opening doors, or looking at objects.

Night falls in a haunted mansion. You hear a weird noise and decide to investigate. As you near the bottom of the stairs, you realize you are trapped in a clone of Seventh Guest. Yikes! Things couldn't be much scarier. They will get scarier however, as you realize that this isn't quite as good.

"Creepy, sneaky and fun"

It's not bad though. As clones of Seventh Guest go, things could be worse. The graphics are smooth, if a little chunky, and the puzzles about as taxing as those found in Seventh Guest. The atmosphere is eerie rather than truly frightening and it moves along at a fair clip. The game needs a little variety and the heads that pop up when you speak to people look dumb. Get past that though, and it's fun.

Frank O'Connor

Adventure
Memory support
Creepy happenings
Undead fiends

Sega Of America
Machine: Sega Saturn
Price: $50
Available: Now

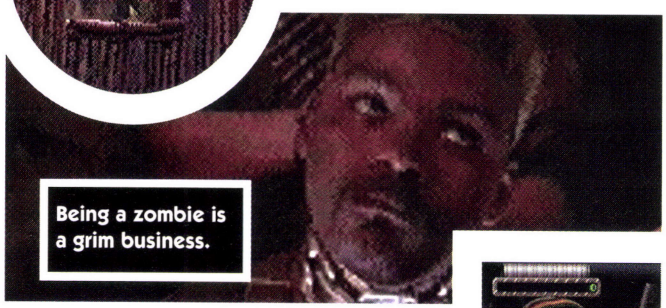
Graphics	6
Sound	6
Playability	6

ULTIMATE GAMER *FINAL RATING* **6**

CORPSE KILLER



Being pretty is never a prerequisite for being shot. As a matter of fact, it helps if you're ugly in this scenario.



Being a zombie is a grim business.







Dead men should stay put. They should lie down in their graves and stay still. They should rot, smell and generally be quiet. What they shouldn't do is wander around biting people's heads off and causing a fuss. Unfortunately, on a mysterious island in the Caribbean, they're doing just that.

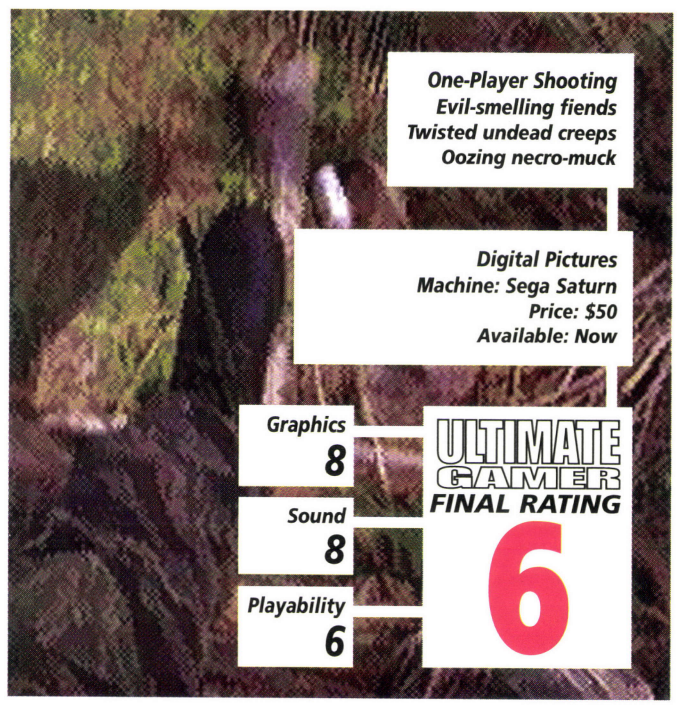
Your mission, should you decide to accept it, is to run and drive around the island, shooting at everything that staggers. Filthy undead scum have no more right to be alive than cockroaches. Don't try to reason with them, since all they want to do is eat your brains. The game is

"Day of the Even Deader"

based heavily on old coin-ops like **Operation Wolf**, but sadly there's no support for the Sega Stunner light gun. All your actions are controlled by joypad or mouse. Fortunately the control system is pretty decent, as are the (very) high-quality full-motion graphics.

Although super-simplistic, **Corpse Killer** is good fun and a nice game to impress your pals with. Competition lies with **Virtua Cop**, but hey, this is out first and has a lot more gratuitous violence.

Frank O'Connor



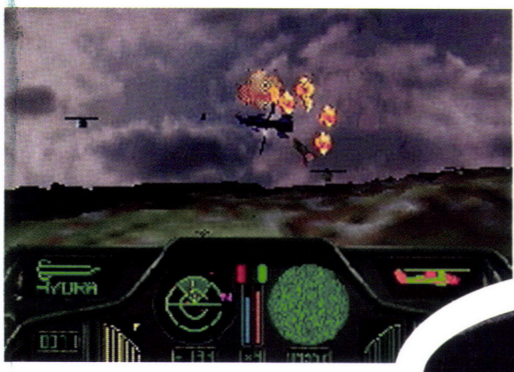
One-Player Shooting
Evil-smelling fiends
Twisted undead creeps
Oozing necro-muck

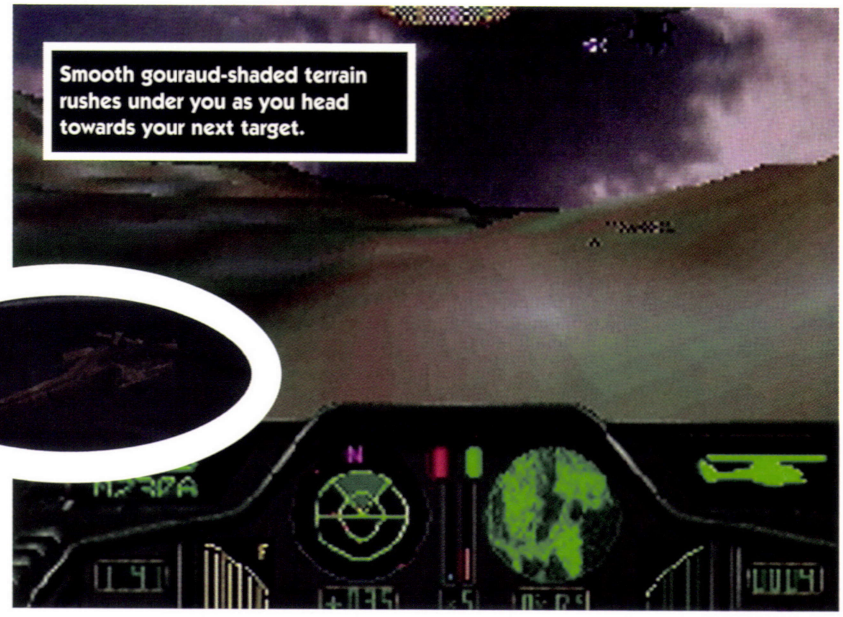
Digital Pictures
Machine: Sega Saturn
Price: $50
Available: Now

Graphics	*8*
Sound	*8*
Playability	*6*

ULTIMATE GAMER *FINAL RATING* **6**

BLACK FIRE





Smooth gouraud-shaded terrain rushes under you as you head towards your next target.





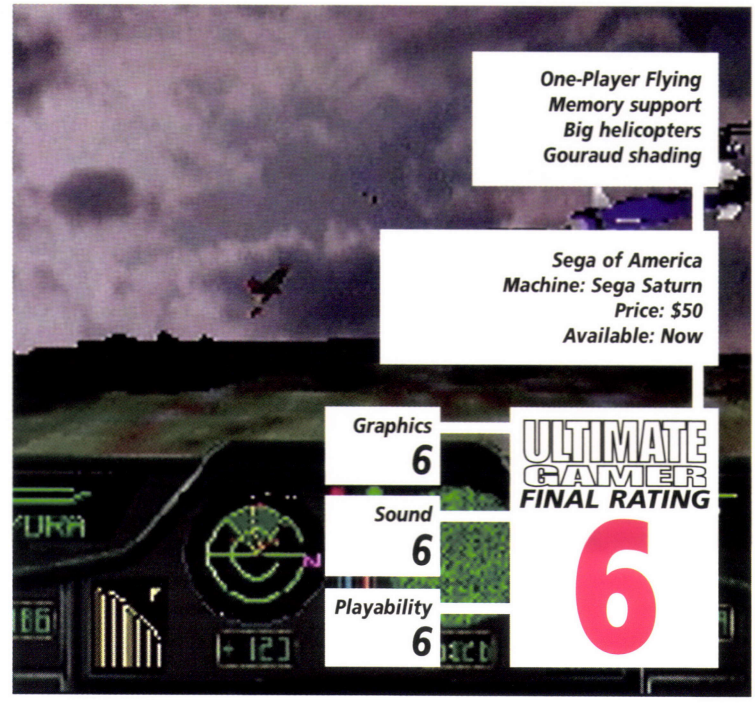
Rendered graphics set the general tone for the proceedings: high tech, low intelligence and lots of fun.

Black Fire has been in development for a very long time, and one of the unfortunate consequences of this is that graphically, it's very much a first generation product. The landscapes move smoothly enough, but the overall appearance is shoddy and bland. Not a graphical masterpiece by any standards.

"Graphically dull, but still fun"

The gameplay however, is simplistic, addictive, high-speed blasting. There's a lot of fun to be had for helicopter and blasting fans alike. Mostly the missions are a simple case of seek-and-destroy, but things do get more complicated further into the game. At no point will your brain be stretched, but some of the later missions are at least reflexively taxing. A very pleasant little diversion.

Frank O'Connor



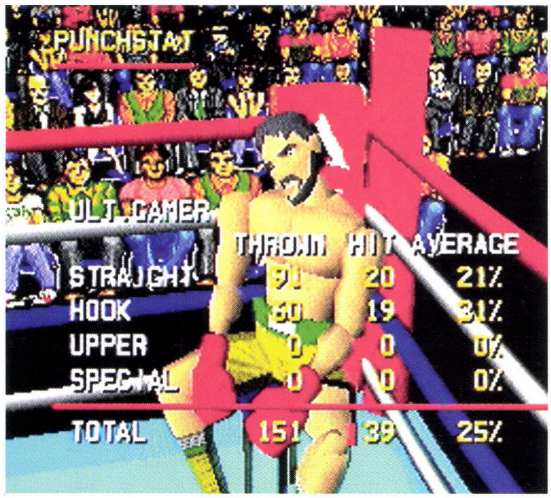
One-Player Flying
Memory support
Big helicopters
Gouraud shading

Sega of America
Machine: Sega Saturn
Price: $50
Available: Now

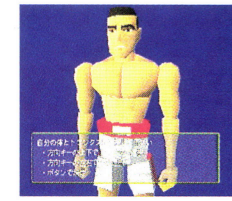
Graphics	6
Sound	6
Playability	6

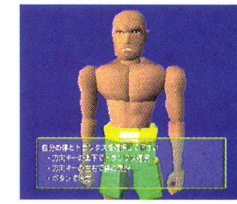
ULTIMATE GAMER FINAL RATING **6**

BOXER'S ROAD

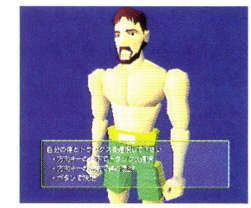


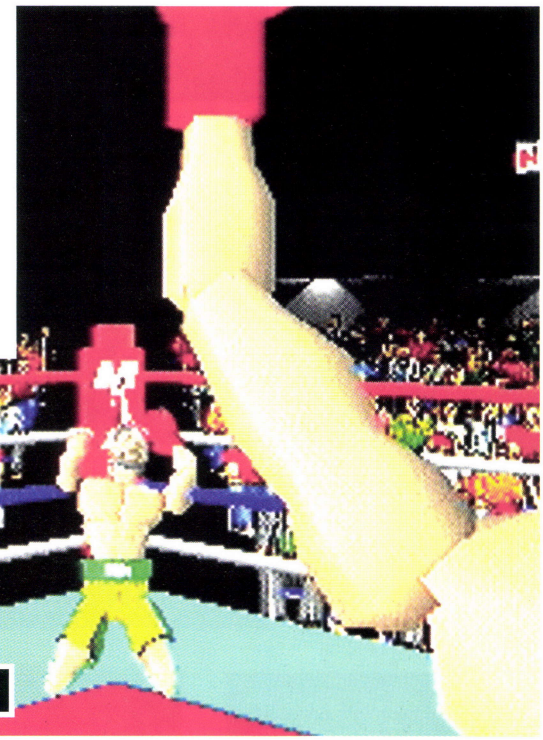
Build yourself a custom-made boxer and begin your quest for the title. Choose skin color, hairstyles and even the color of your trunks. If you're looking for a quickie, you can always select Versus Mode.

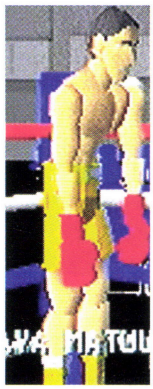




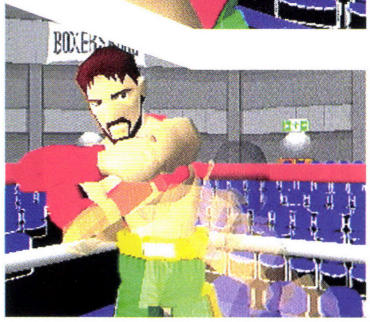




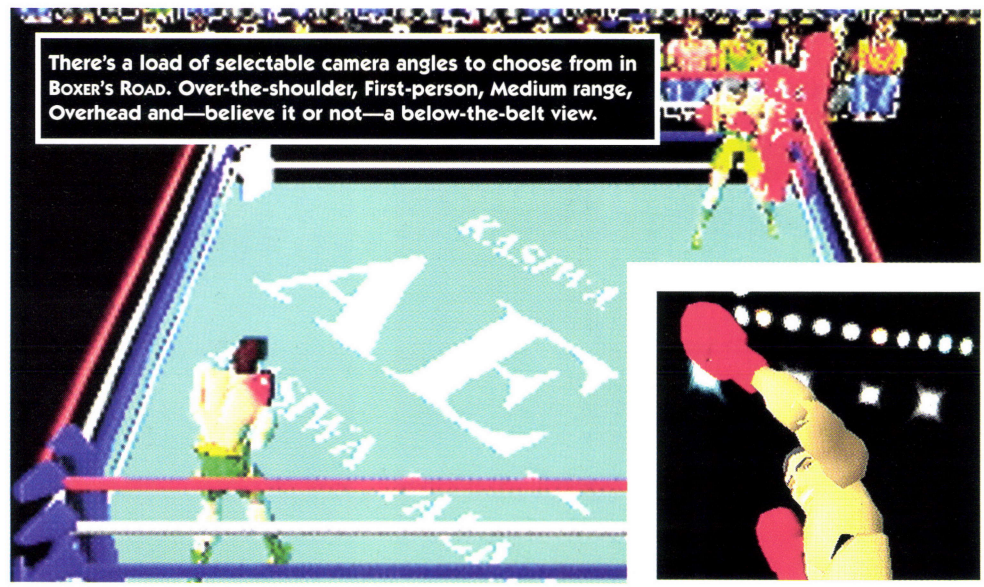








There's a load of selectable camera angles to choose from in BOXER'S ROAD. Over-the-shoulder, First-person, Medium range, Overhead and—believe it or not—a below-the-belt view.



Did you ever stop and wonder why fighting games are so massively popular these days? Sure, it's fun to beat someone silly, but why? There are lots of little reasons, but it all comes down to one simple fact: People love action. Lots of action. The level of action, together with precise, friendly control mechanics, can enhance any video-game experience, but with fighting games, it's practically a make-or-break situation.

"Boxer's Road covers a lot of territory... maybe too much."

Even though a boxing game may not fit into the standard **Street Fighter II**-type genre, it's a fighting game nonetheless. In addition, it's a sport of coordination, timing and strategy.

Boxer's Road puts you "on the road" to a title fight. Your personal trainer will put you through a rigorous—if not torturous—training regimen. Stuff like weight training, sparring, hitting the bag and eating right are all factors in building a good fighter. These training periods between fights can last weeks or even months. Luckily, the game fast-forwards its built-in clock during most of the tedious moments. I can understand the reasons behind the simulation aspect of the game, but there's so much of it going on, I almost expected to see a line-scroll asking whether or not my boxer should wipe his ass after he takes a dump.

The graphics are of **Virtua Fighter** quality—a tad disappointing considering what's been accomplished with games like **Tekken** and **VF 2**. There's a ton of camera angles to select from, which can be changed on-the-fly by hitting the Select button. One of the more useful camera angles is similar to the one found in the arcade version of **Punch Out!**; a transparent, behind-the-fighter point of view. That's cool.

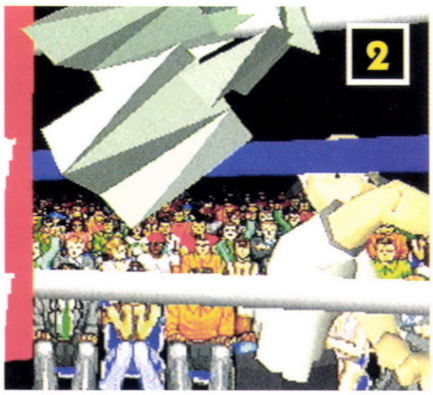
The main problem with Boxer's Road—besides its redundant sim routines—is its sluggishness. Even in the early rounds, a fighter's arms move at a pace which would embarrass Richard Simmons. I realize it's a boxing game and I don't expect to deliver consecutive combos of rapid-fire punches, but come on! I want action!

As big a boxing fanatic as I am, I still couldn't remain captivated by Boxer's Road for more than an hour. If you're looking for a fully functional, strategically-minded boxing sim, go for it. If, on the other hand, you want fast-paced, kick-the-other-guy's-butt-right-now boxing action, you're gonna have to wait for the next one.

Jim Loftus



1 There's an option to have your trainer throw in the towel if things look hopeless. Here we see the trainer getting set to call it quits.
2 After all, you'll live to fight another day.
3 Defeat sucks.









4 Your entire boxing career can be stored on a single memory card. This gives you the option of taking some time off. You can also play back "videotape" footage from previous fights. A great feature!

One/Two-Player Fighting
Memory card support
Fully-customizable career
Multiple camera angles

New Inc.
Machine: Sony PlayStation
Price: $Import
Available: Now

Graphics	*7*
Sound	*7*
Playability	*6*

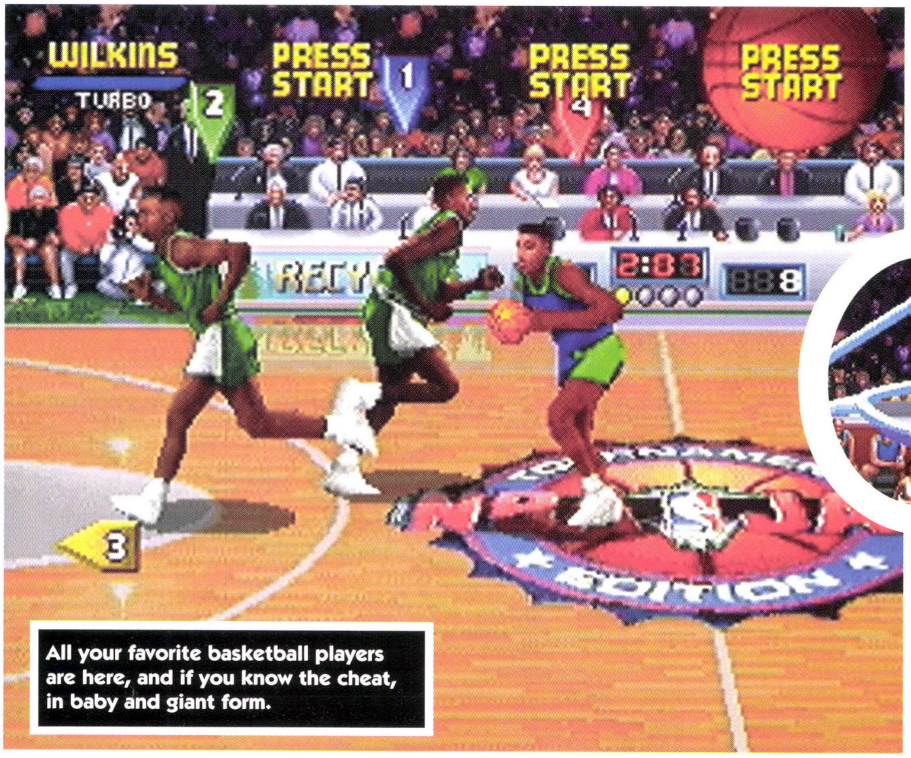
ULTIMATE GAMER *FINAL RATING* **7**



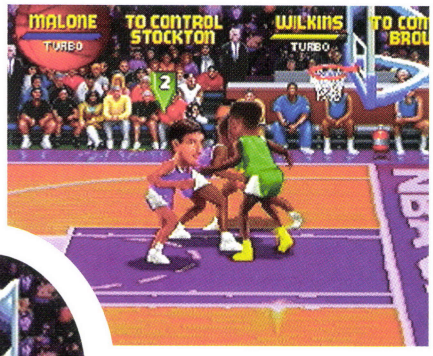


If you train properly and eat well-balanced meals, you'll build a more productive fighter.

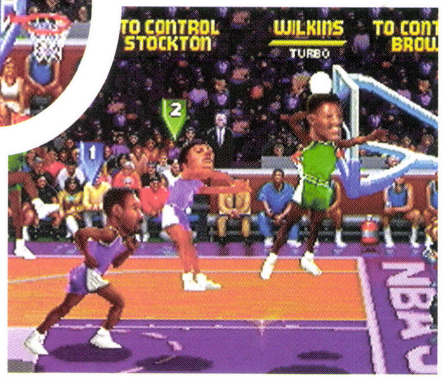
NBA JAM



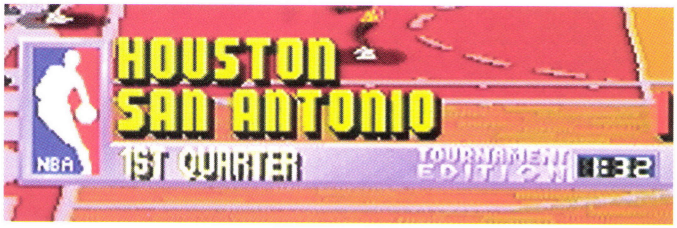
All your favorite basketball players are here, and if you know the cheat, in baby and giant form.



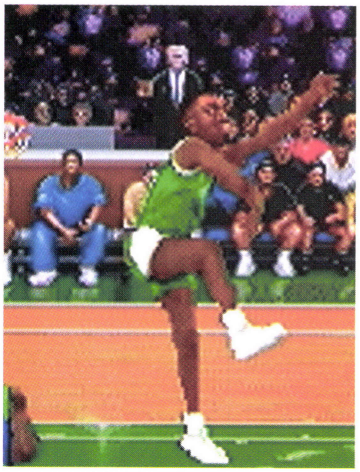


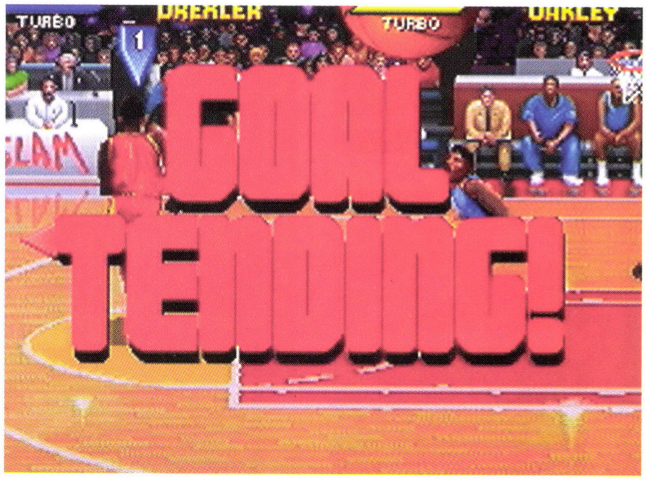


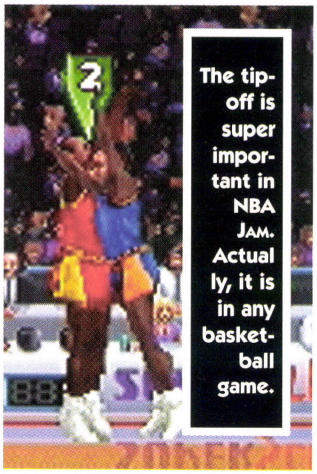




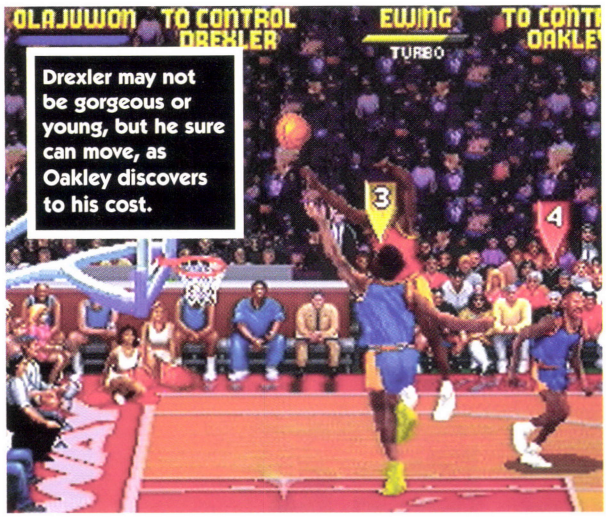


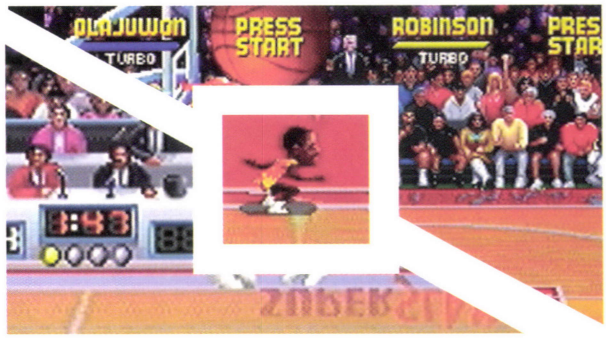




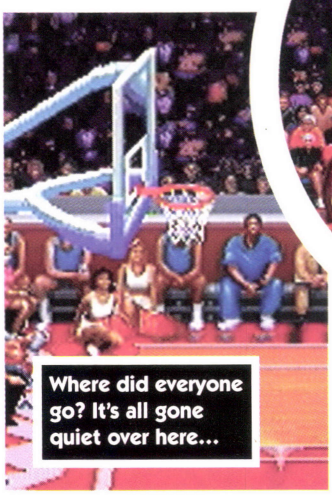


The tip-off is super important in NBA JAM. Actually, it is in any basketball game.











NBA Jam just kind of showed up in the arcades one day and took over. It's one of the few coin-ops of the last five years to reach the number-one spot and not be a fighting game. It's the simplest thing in the world. A basketball game with loads of hidden cheats and moves and nice, fast gameplay. Nothing more to it.

The lack of variety doesn't stop this from being one of the most frantically addictive titles for years, though. The PlayStation (and Saturn) version is a conversion of the **Tournament Edition**, with even more cheats and a bunch of multi-player options. NBA Jam is far more fun with a group of friends than as a single-player game, but the cheats and turbo moves do retain interest for people with no pals, who live in a cave, probably.

The graphics are cute, if less than spectacular, and the car-

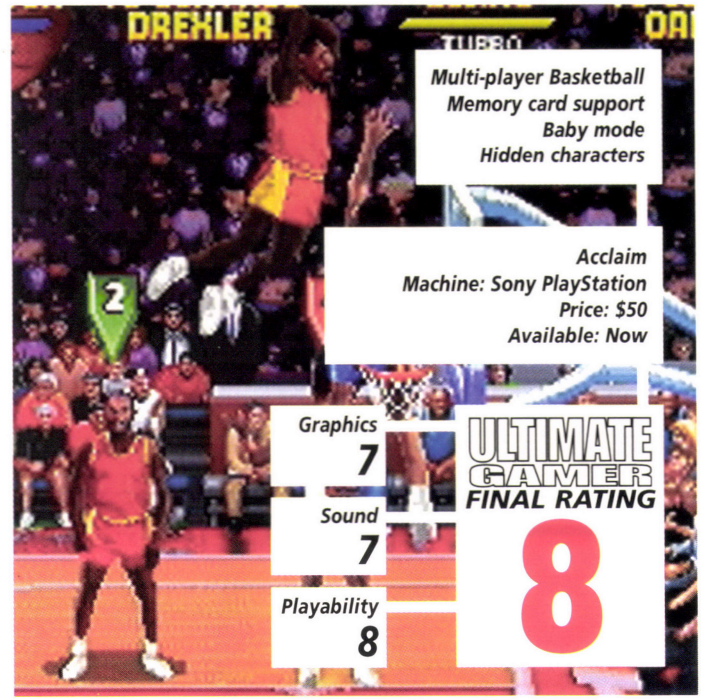
"An exact replica of the arcade machine"

toon style of presentation is mixed well with the digitized character faces. And that's where this game has a huge advantage over other basketball sims. You can actually control a recognizable approximation of your favorite NBA star. Shaq looks like Shaq and Hakeem looks like Hakeem. They possess similar abilities to their real-life counterparts, but the players are pretty much evened out by the huge range of special moves.

In two-player mode, it's easy to switch between characters simply by hitting a button, but it can get confusing when your character is off screen for a couple of seconds. Confusion is compounded by the seemingly bizarre actions of the computer-controlled players. Once you get used to it though, the control system and game mechanics become simplicity itself.

How close is this to the original arcade game? Very. In fact, we would defy anyone to spot any immediate graphical differences. Even the loading times, sometimes a pain in the ass on the PlayStation, have been tweaked, honed and are hardly intrusive at all. The same praise must also be heaped on the Sega Saturn version of the game. One tiny criticism is that the game really is limited to simple shooting, tackling and dunking. Otherwise, perfect sporting stuff.

Frank O'Connor

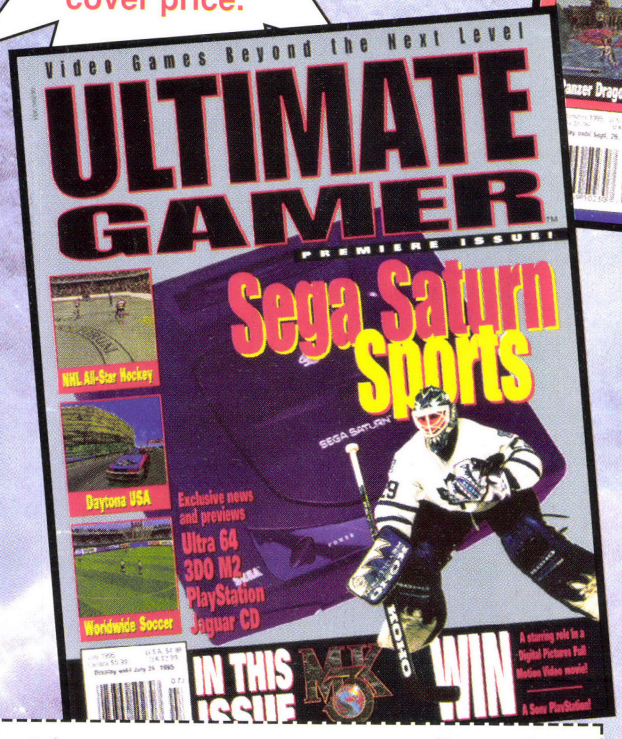


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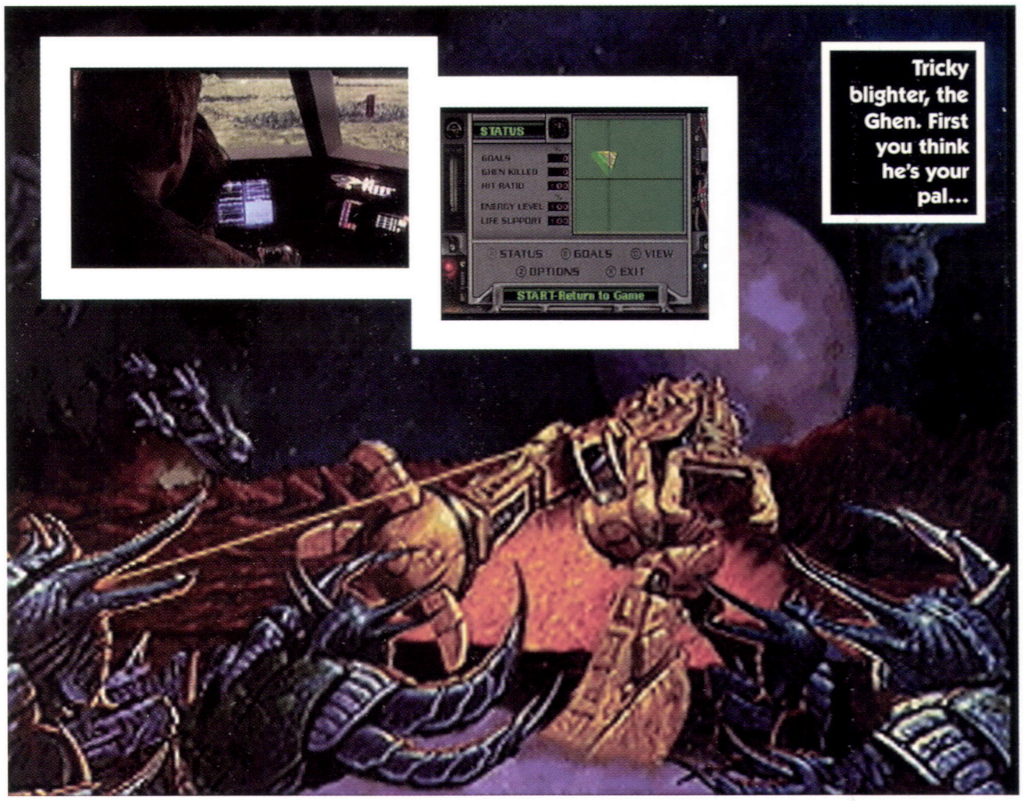
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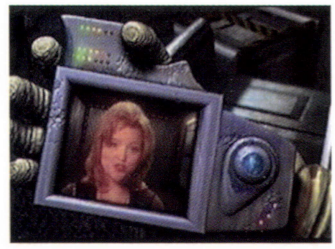
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GHEN WAR



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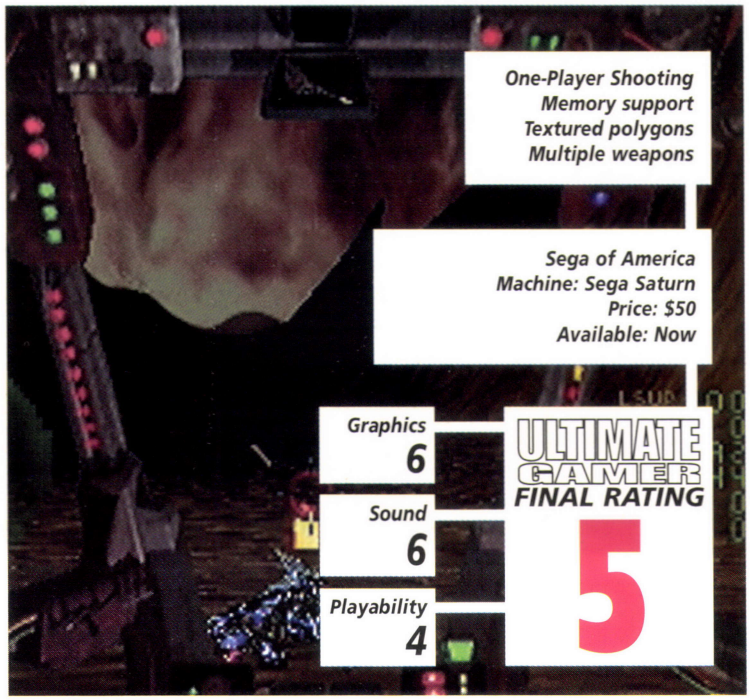
Destroy every Ghen you can find to save the human race.

Shoot, walk, shoot, walk, jump, shoot, walk. Apparently Sega thinks it's fun to walk around a lot. If you agree, then Ghen War is truly the game for you. You get to wander around a fair old bit, shooting bad guys, occasionally jumping to reach higher parts of a level. You also get to watch nice rendered intros.

"Terminally dull at best"

The problem is that even as the game opens up, revealing both plot and new scenarios, it still plays the same, and the sad thing is that it's really boring. We tried to get interested, but we just couldn't. Headache-inducing tedium set in and we had to go for a sleep. Unfortunately, when we woke up we discovered the game was still there and we had to play it again. So we cried.

Frank O'Connor



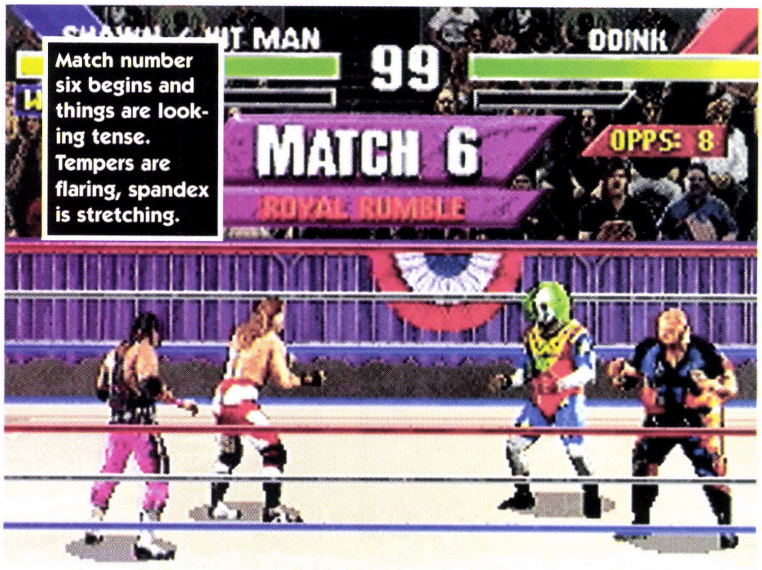
One-Player Shooting
Memory support
Textured polygons
Multiple weapons

Sega of America
Machine: Sega Saturn
Price: $50
Available: Now

Graphics	6
Sound	6
Playability	4

ULTIMATE GAMER FINAL RATING **5**

WWF WRESTLEMANIA



Match number six begins and things are looking tense. Tempers are flaring, spandex is stretching.

The heyday of WWF is long gone. Remember the greats? Like Hulk Hogan, Rowdy Roddy Piper, Jimmy "Superfly" Snuka and the rest of the gang? Only a couple of the true greats are left in the game now, like Brett Hart and The Undertaker.

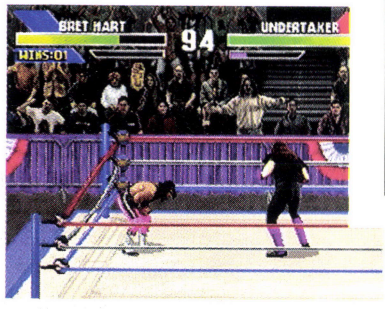
Based on the Williams coin-op, the PlayStation version is as near as dammit to the original. All the moves, all the graphics and all

"Muscle-bound mirth and mayhem"

the ridiculous noises have been squeezed onto a shiny black compact disc. The result is a terrifyingly addictive and totally insane wrestlefest. The chaos that ensues when the bell rings must be seen to be believed. After a few games though, you'll discover that there's a lot more to **Wrestlemania** than initially meets the eye. Combos, secret moves, hidden characters and lots more. A frantic and funny fighting game.

Frank O'Connor







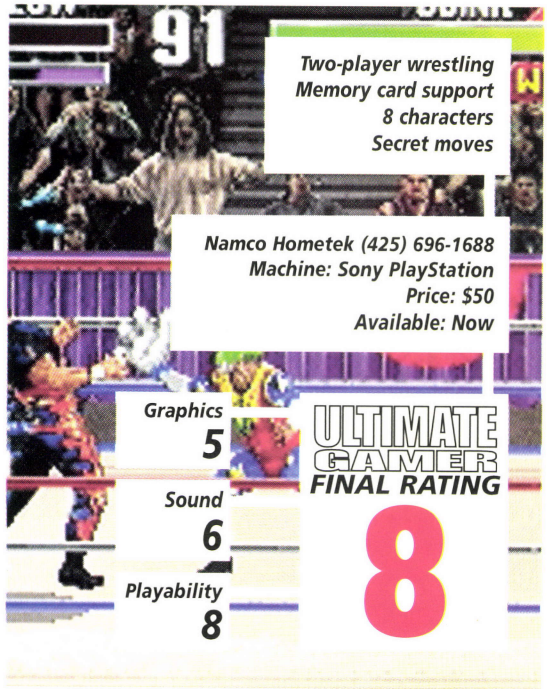






Hitman Hart and The Undertaker, best buddies, or greatest enemies? Well, The Undertaker hates everyone.

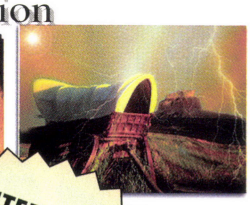




Made like a motion picture, designed like your imagination







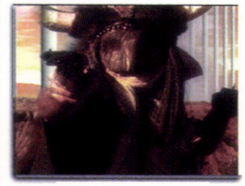
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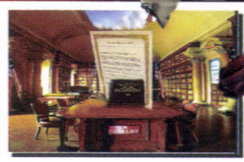


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recorded at Heaven International Studios
Game Concept and Design: Mindfields
Surrealistic Graphics: the dream desIgners
Art Department: Samora Saint

Directed by Phillip Christian

Original Score by Saint



†he dream designers ©1994

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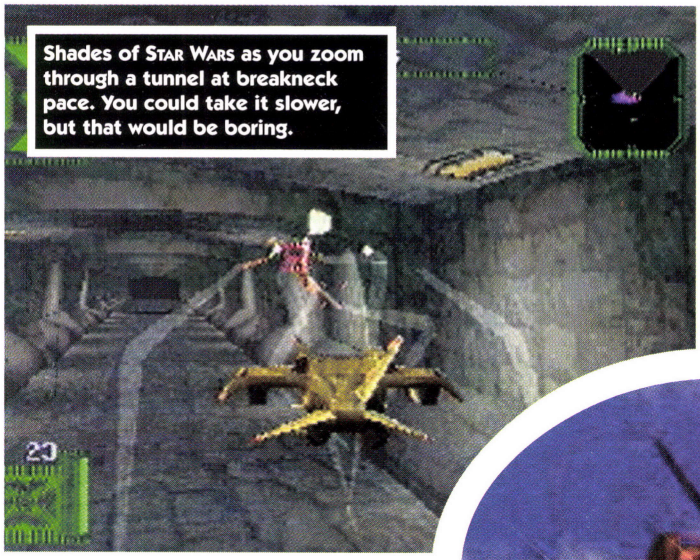
WARHAWK







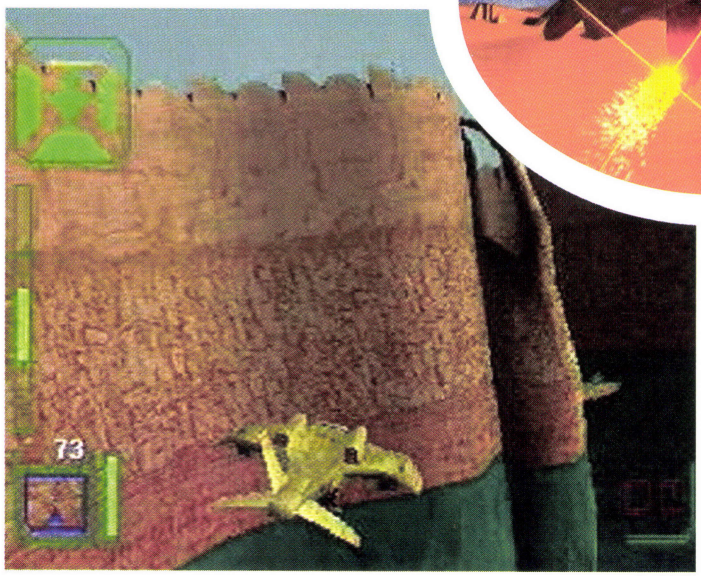
Boss monsters. We love 'em. Especially when they're as big and ugly as these guys. Huge is simply not adequate.

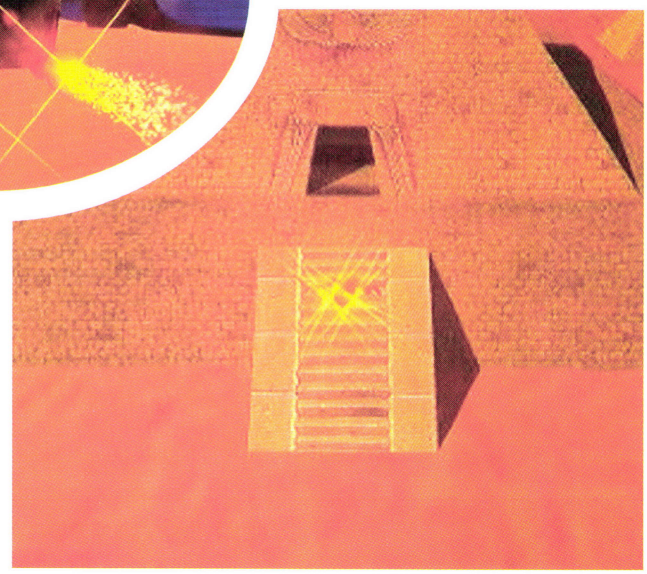


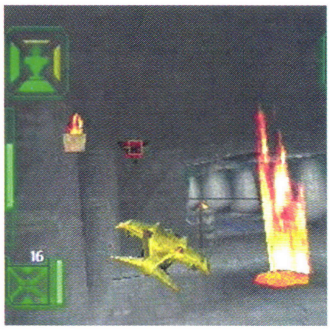
Shades of STAR WARS as you zoom through a tunnel at breakneck pace. You could take it slower, but that would be boring.



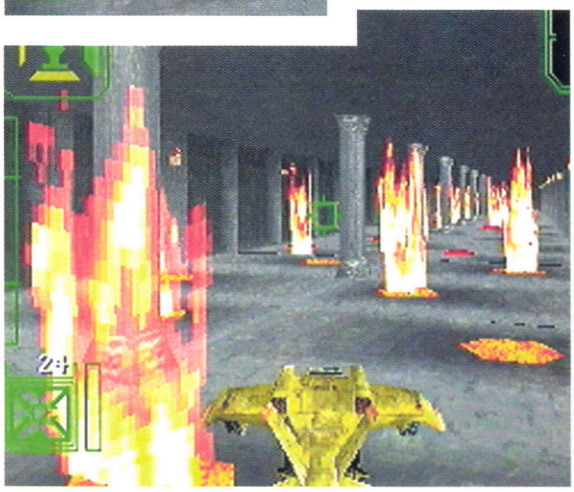








These graphics move at up to 30 frames per second and the effect is totally staggering. This could be one of the best games ever made. It certainly looks that way.



Now and then, an ambitious concept really works. Not often, but every now and then. The people at Sony wanted to make a PlayStation game that looked, sounded and felt like a science fiction movie. This kind of effort would normally end in cosmetic and gameplay tragedy. Not this time. Warhawk is one of the most polished and accomplished pieces of software ever made.

I can't even begin to tell you how good it looks. Some levels look utterly incredible, some look totally astonishing, and those are just the boring levels. You take control of a futuristic spacecraft, hellbent on destroying alien installations on a barren and dangerous world.

To this end you'll find yourself armed to the teeth and smack in the middle of a cataclysmic struggle between good and evil. Why?

"A bit like Star Wars, only better-looking"

Who cares? All we care about is that you get to fly around at will, laying waste to entire legions of enemy spacecraft, boats, tanks and ground bases. All in a 3-D environment more ambitious than any yet seen on a home system.

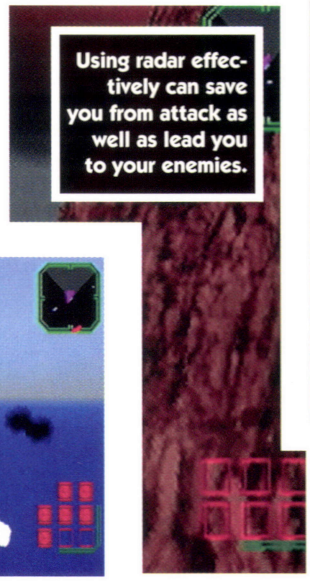
Did I mention that the music is the best on any game, ever? I should have. A team of musicians has gone to great lengths to ensure that this game sounds a lot like **Star Wars**, or **Batman**, or any other rousing movie score you can think of. Best of all, the music is context-sensitive, so if you find yourself in a scary situation, especially scary music will play. If you find yourself in a relaxed situation, then you must be playing another game.

Everything about Warhawk, from the pristine control method, to the clever boss monsters, will have you dribbling glibly from the corner of your mouth. This is the game that says, "This is why you bought a PlayStation". Of course it doesn't actually say that, but you know what I mean.

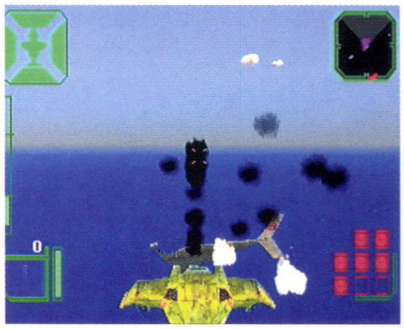
A password system means that the otherwise daunting task becomes a little more approachable, even for those of you who haven't invested in memory cards. This game probably won't ever appear on the PC, and certainly never on the Saturn, so go have a word with Santa Claus.

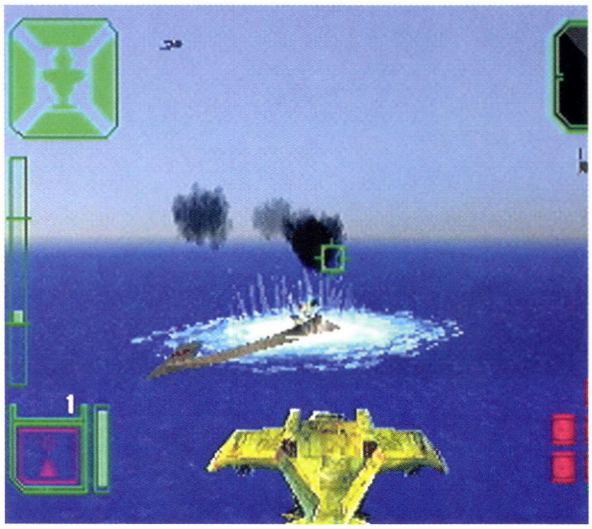
Frank O'Connor

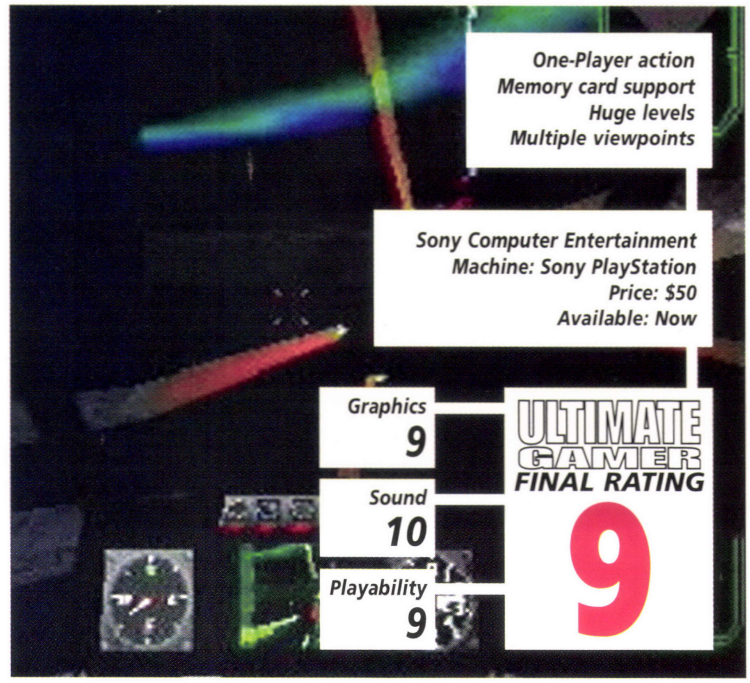




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Graphics	9
Sound	10
Playability	9

ULTIMATE GAMER FINAL RATING **9**

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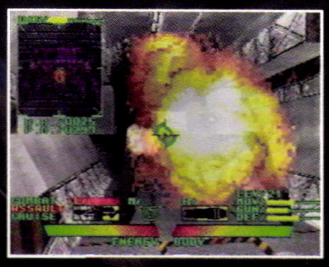
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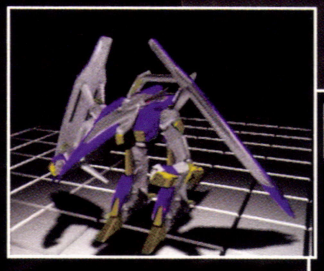
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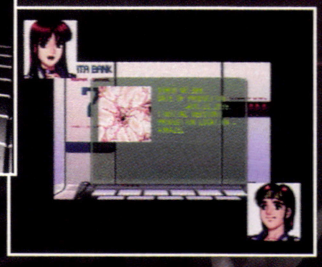


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LOST EDEN



Wise old ugly guys give you advice.

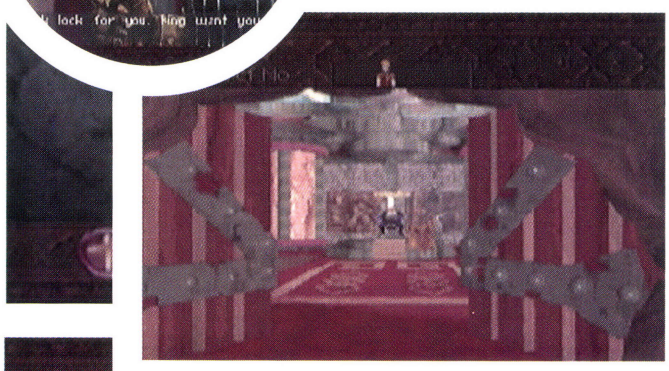
You can smell a French game coming a mile off. It's a weird, bonkers, garlic-laden, America-hating, culture-protecting, rude and slightly original smell. Yes, French games do tend to be odd, but sometimes that oddness translates into weird and otherwordly beauty. On the other hand, of course, it sometimes translates into an illogical love of Jerry Lewis and Mickey Rourke.

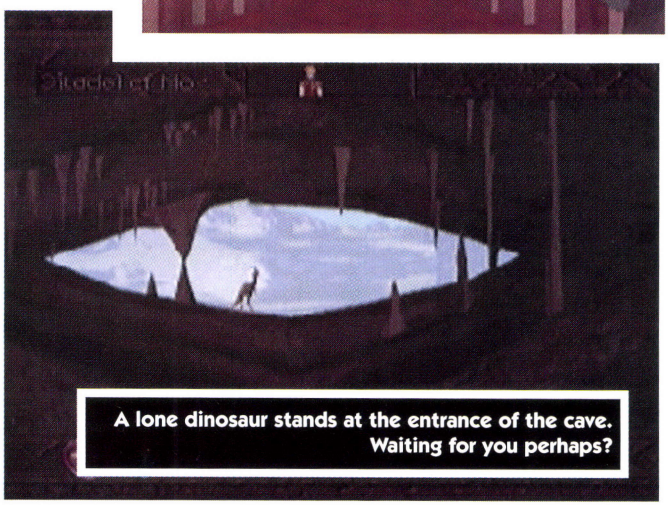
Lost Eden is a remarkable game. It plays something like a prehistoric **Seventh Guest**. You find yourself trapped in a land filled with talking dinosaurs and even weirder characters. You also find yourself at the heart of a mystery, a mystery which you have to use intuitive skills and puzzle solving abilities to deal with. Initially dull (if attractive), the game soon opens up to reveal a depth of plot and action you might not have expected. All in all, it's a good, solid alternative to **Myst**.

Frank O'Connor

"Weird, sometimes beautiful"







A lone dinosaur stands at the entrance of the cave. Waiting for you perhaps?



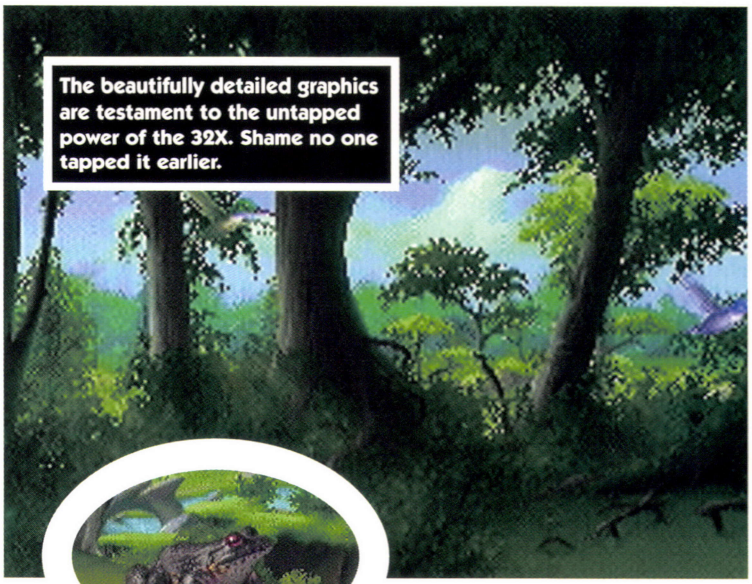
Adventure
Rendered graphics
French dinosaurs
Icon driven play

Virgin Interactive
Machine: 3DO
Price: $50
Available: Now

Graphics	9
Sound	8
Playability	7

ULTIMATE GAMER *FINAL RATING* **7**

KOLIBRI



The beautifully detailed graphics are testament to the untapped power of the 32X. Shame no one tapped it earlier.





Ecco the Dolphin didn't exactly set the world on fire when it was released a couple of years ago, but it did present the Genesis gaming population with an alternative to blasting and killing. It also showed off some of the graphic abilities of the Genesis. **Kolibri**, from the same team, does pretty much the same thing for the 32X.

This time though, you get to kill things. Sadly, all the killing is done by a cute little hummingbird. We have a hummingbird who lives in a tree out-

"Cute, playable and ecologically sound"

side our window, but at no time has he ever killed anyone with a laser beam. Nor has he dropped bombs on insects or other nasty creatures. In fact, our real-life hummingbird bears little or no resemblance to any of the antics found in games like **Defender**, **Raiden** or **Scramble**. Kolibri however, does. It's a fun, simple, addictive shooter, with real graphical flair and a nice visual twist.

Frank O'Connor



The game is all about atmosphere and style; lovely stuff.



One Player shooting
Hi res graphics
24 bit color
Multiple weapons

Sega of America
Machine: Genesis 32X
Price: $60
Available: Now

Graphics	9
Sound	6
Playability	7

ULTIMATE GAMER FINAL RATING **7**

BURN CYCLE • PHILLIPS • PC CD-ROM

The Philips sensation gets a second life on PC.



It's been a year and it still doesn't look dated.



There's a virus in your head and you've got two hours to expel it or it's curtains. A kind of cyber version of the classic film, D.O.A., BURN CYCLE has you frantically searching for a way to sooth your aching brain—so to speak. Some creative visuals and an interesting story are what propel this game.

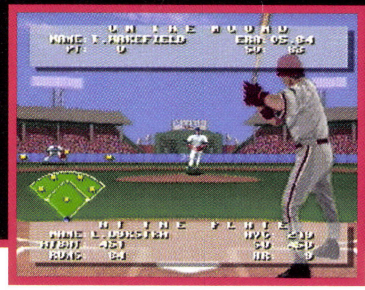
Graphics	7
Sound	9
Playability	6

ULTIMATE GAMER FINAL RATING

7

BIG HURT BASEBALL • ACCLAIM • SUPER NES

Smooth player animations are not enough to save this game.



The only BIG HURT here is in your pocketbook.



There are too many baseball games out there already. What we didn't need was one more sub-par opus to confuse things even more. Acclaim does some nice stuff with its motion-capture facility, but all the realistic player movements in the world can't make up for disjointed gameplay.

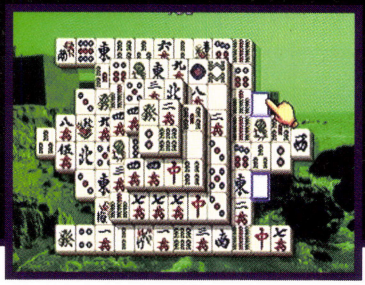
Graphics	6
Sound	5
Playability	5

ULTIMATE GAMER FINAL RATING

5

SHANGHAI • ACTIVISION • SATURN

When you have mastered the art of classic SHANGHAI...



...take a stab at one of the other versions.



SHANGHAI: In gaming terms, it means a far-eastern solitaire inport that uses tiles instead of playing cards. Match tiles and remove them from the playing field. Eliminate all the tiles and you win. That's the basic breakdown of this time-filling game that, strangely enough, is quite enjoyable.

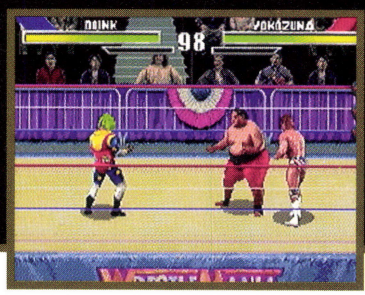
Graphics	6
Sound	4
Playability	5

ULTIMATE GAMER FINAL RATING

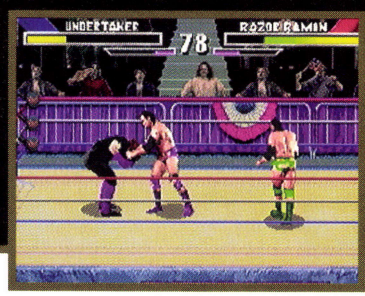
5

WWF WRESTLEMANIA • ACCLAIM • SEGA 32X

Let's get ready to rumble...!



I want to see Jimmy "Super-fly" Snuka!!!!!



Not exactly arcade perfect, WWF WRESTLEMANIA should satisfy those of you out there who are still entertained by this outdated spectacle. Choose one of eight lame wrestlers to throw in the ring. The introduction of combos and FATAL FURY-esque moves make this a much better game than it should have been.

Graphics	7
Sound	5
Playability	7

ULTIMATE GAMER FINAL RATING

6

FIFA '96 • ELECTRONIC ARTS • GENESIS

Play with perfection and it might blow up in your face.



Futbol is so much fun I think I'm going to wet myself.



The pinnacle of soccer sims was reached last year when EA Sports released its '95 update of this series. Great graphics and playability made even soccer nay-sayers like myself, instant fans. However, they didn't know when to stop tinkering. The graphics are better, but not much else.

Graphics	8
Sound	7
Playability	7

ULTIMATE GAMER FINAL RATING **7**

INTERNATIONAL SUPERSTAR SOCCER DELUXE • KONAMI • SUPER NES

High-octane soccer fun that really keeps you on your toes!



You can't hear it, but the color commentary is great.



For the first time in the States, you can now experience the full-throttle action of this super-charged soccer game. ISSD is a treat to play. In the same catagory as the superb HEAD-ON SOCCER, ISSD delivers the heart-pounding action that's missing in this all-too-often boring sport.

Graphics	8
Sound	8
Playability	8

ULTIMATE GAMER FINAL RATING **8**

NBA LIVE '96 • ELECTRONIC ARTS • SUPER NES

It's showtime folks!



A union of LIVE '95 and COACH K's best features.



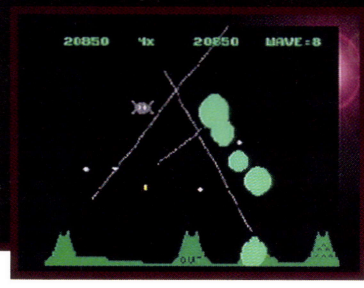
EA Sports' dominance is maintained with this superior update. In a smart move, EA has decided to combine the best facets of its two best games: COACH K and LIVE '95. Now, not only do you have all the key stuff from other NBA games, you've also got COACH K's diving for balls and play-calling options.

Graphics	8
Sound	6
Playability	8

ULTIMATE GAMER FINAL RATING **8**

MISSLE COMMAND 3-D • ATARI • JAGUAR

Play the classic for a little nostalgia.



The new version includes some nifty bosses to tangle with.



Backs against the wall, Atari digs deep into its pockets and pulls out an old classic. Souped-up for the Jag, MISSLE COMMAND 3-D comes with three games: ORIGINAL MISSLE COMMAND, MISSLE COMMAND PLUS and 3-D MISSLE COMMAND. Don't bother with MC PLUS, but both the classic version and the 3-D version rock.

Graphics	7
Sound	6
Playability	6

ULTIMATE GAMER FINAL RATING **7**

TACTICAL

STRATEGIES ▾ CHEATS ▾ CODES

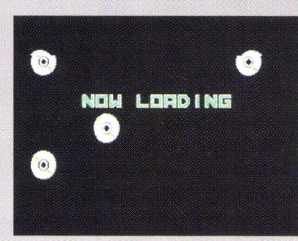
We here at **Ultimate Gamer** understand that even the best of players may have a bad day every now and then. Since we wouldn't want any unnecessary mass-murders taking place, we feel it's our duty to arm you with nothing but the very best tips and codes available. Depend on **Tactical** every month for an easy solution to your gaming problems.

AIR COMBAT SPECIAL

Namco's *Air Combat* has plenty of secrets to be discovered. In addition to the tiny little cheats—like holding the △ button and pressing START to skip the boring briefing session at the start of the game—there's also a secret "loading" screen that leads to five different Easter eggs. These range from a bizarre hidden game to the ability to start with 999 million credits! Be aware that these secrets were tested on the American version of *Air Combat*, but they also work on the Japanese version of the game, which—trivia buffs take note—is titled *Ace Combat*.









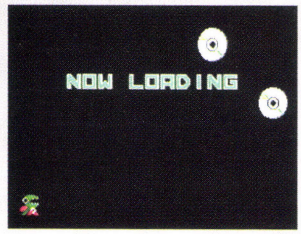
HOW TO FIND THE CD LOADING SCREEN

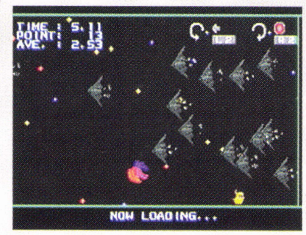
To activate the secret alternate loading screen in *Air Combat*, simply hold the **R1** and ○ buttons at any point in the game when the standard "bird logo" loading screen (seen above) is about to appear. If the "bird" screen appears, you're too late—but if you held the buttons down at the right time, you should see a new, black loading screen with little compact discs bouncing around. The discs will disappear one by one to indicate how much loading time remains; it's during this time that you must press the buttons as described below and on the following page to activate some of the game's hidden modes.

HOW TO FIND THE HIDDEN GAME

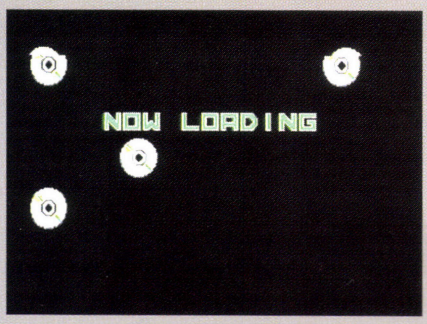
When the secret CD loading menu appears as described above, quickly press **Up**, **Left**, **Down**, **Right**. A tiny picture of a Fygar—the dragon character from Namco's classic *Dig Dug* arcade game—will appear in the lower left corner of the screen to indicate that the code worked. With this cheat in place, start the game, or return to the title screen and continue to reach the "loading" screen again. This time, don't hold any buttons—the "loading" menu will be replaced by a strange hidden game in which you must steer the *Air Combat* bird symbol around the screen and destroy as many of the passing ships and missiles as you can before a tiny bird can walk from the left side of the screen to the right. Weird! Use the **L2** and **R2** (or **Left** and ○) buttons to spin the symbol clockwise and counter-clockwise; if you don't press any buttons, you'll crash into the walls and die. Tap the **R1** button to toggle between three different control configurations. Get a score of 4.60 or higher and you'll get something...but we're not sure what.



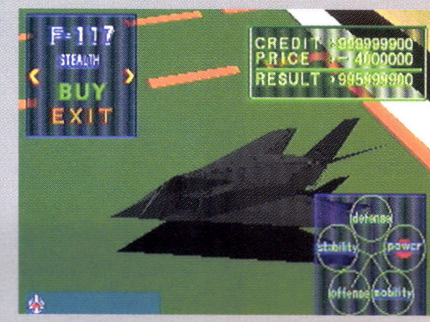






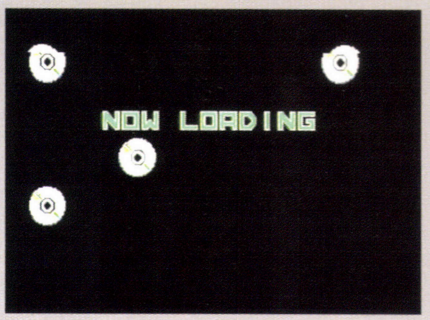






HOW TO START WITH 999,999,900 CREDITS

At the special CD loading menu, quickly press **Down**, ○, △, △, △, ○, △, ○, △, then press ○+△ simultaneously twice and hold both buttons down after the second press. You'll see a Pooka character from *Dig Dug* appear in the corner of the screen. Now start the game and visit the fighter select screen. You'll see that you have instantly earned an incredible 999,999,900 credits which you can use to buy any ship or wingman available.

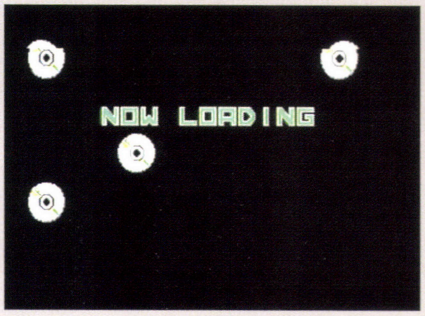




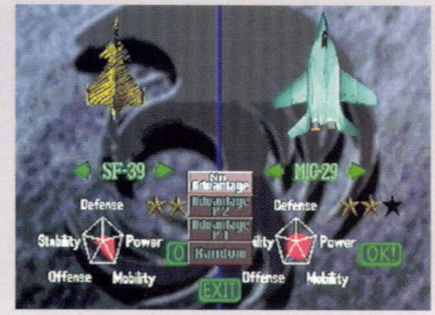


HOW TO CHOOSE DIFFERENTLY COLORED SHIPS

Are you tired of playing *Air Combat* with the same gray or white-and-purple ships? If you're fond of playing with the behind-the-plane perspective, try this code at the CD loading menu: **Up**, **Down**, **Left**, **Right**, **Up**, **Down**, **Left**, **Right**, **R1**—continue to hold the **R1** button until you see a spaceship appear in the corner of the screen. Now start the game, and notice that when choosing your plane, all of the standard ships have been painted different colors.







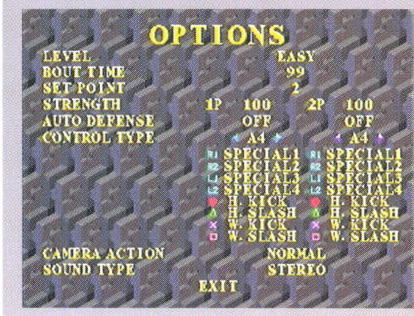
HOW TO CHOOSE DIFFERENTLY COLORED SHIPS IN 2P MODE

If you dig *Air Combat*'s two-player mode, here's another cheat that might make your game twice as much fun. At the CD loading menu, quickly press Left, Right, Left, Right, Down, Up, Down, Up, ○, ○, △, △, △—continue to hold the △ button until you see an insect appear in the corner of the screen. Now start the game in two-player mode, and notice that each of the fighters has an alternate-color version available, effectively doubling the number of vehicles to choose from.

HOW TO CHOOSE DIFFERENT WINGMEN

If you're a newcomer to the game of *Air Combat*, this cheat won't make much sense to you, because you don't get to choose a wingman until after you've completed the game's first three missions. If you're ready for it, though, try entering the following code at the CD loading menu: Hold the **R1** button and press **START** 10 times (continue to hold **START** after the tenth press.) This code is tougher to do than the others, but when you get it to work, you'll find more variety in your available wingmen.

PLAYSTATION



BATTLE ARENA TOSHINDEN

• Easy Desperation Moves

Each character in *Toshinden* has a "desperation" attack that can only be performed while your own energy bar is flashing red. If you beat the one-player game, the screen will display instructions that show how to do your character's desperation move. Instead of memorizing all of the different moves for each fighter, here's a method that allows you to pull them off easily with the exact same button-presses for all characters.

First, visit the option menu and configure your controller so that the **L** and **R** buttons are set up to trigger "Special 1", "Special 2", Special 3" and "Special 4"—setting A4 is a good example. (Don't worry about losing the ability to rotate with the **L** and **R** buttons; did you know that if you quickly press **Down** twice, you'll rotate out of harm's way? You can't choose which direction you'll go in, but the cool thing about this method is that you'll always rotate toward the center of the arena.) Anyway, once your controller is set up as described, you can trigger any character's desperation attack simply by pressing all four **L** and **R** buttons at exactly the same time whenever your energy bar is flashing red. Note that you can only choose the "special" control settings when the game's difficulty is set at "Easy" or "Very Easy"...unless you use the secret code listed on this page to remove this restriction.





• Easy Super Moves

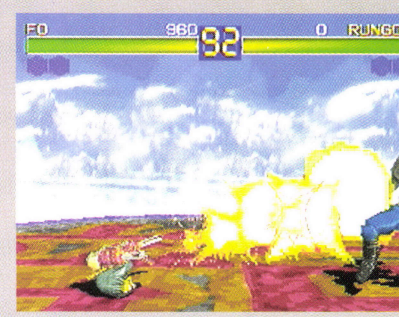
In addition to the desperation moves, each fighter in *Toshinden* also has up to three "Super" moves which are very difficult to execute, but can be used at any time during a match. Here's a list of the "Super" attacks, all shown as if your character is facing the right:

Eiji: ↑↓↑↓→←→←+△+○
Kayin: →↘↓←↙←→←+○+✕
Sofia (1): →↘↓↘→←↓+△+✕
Sofia (2): ↘↓↙↓↘←→↓+△+○
Rungo: ↗↑↖←↙→←↓+△+○
Fo (1): →↗↑↖←+□+○
Fo (2): →↘↓↘→←↓+△+✕
Fo (3): ✕□△○←→←→+△+○
Mondo: →↗↑↖←→↙↓+△+○
Duke: ↘↓↙↓↘↓←→+□+○
Ellis (1): →↗↑↖←+□+○
Ellis (2): ↘↓↙↓↘←→↓+△+○
Gaia: ↘↓↙↓↘←→↓+△+○
Sho: ↓→↗↑↖←↓+△+✕

Cool as they may be, the "Super" moves can be more trouble than they're worth, since they're so difficult to pull off. Wouldn't it be great if there was an easy way to do them? Try this:

First, enter both "boss" codes to access Gaia and Sho. If you haven't heard about these, here's a quick recap: To activate Gaia, press ↓↙←+□ at the title screen while the words "1P GAME", "VS HUMAN" etc. are flying in from the sides of the screen. You'll hear the word "Fight!" and the text will be pink. Wait for the demo to begin, then return to the title screen and press →←→←+□ on Controller 2 while the words are zooming into the center. You'll hear "Fight!" again and the text will change to green. (To choose Gaia, highlight Eiji, hold **Up** on the D-pad and press any button; to choose Sho, highlight Kayin, hold **Down** on the D-pad and press a button.)

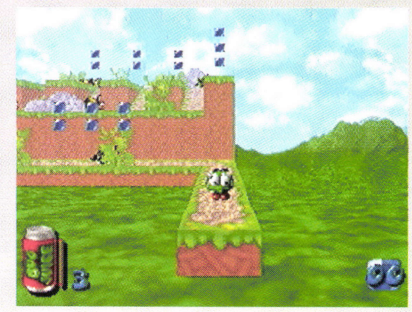
With those codes in place, wait for the demo to begin, then return to the title screen once more and press ↙+✕ on Controller 1 while the words are zooming in. You'll hear the word "Fantastic!" and the text will change to white. With this code in place, set the Control Type for all four "Specials" as described in the "Easy Desperation Moves" code above. Now, at any time during the game, you can trigger one of your character's "Super" attacks simply by holding the **SELECT** button and pressing all four **L** and **R** buttons at exactly the same time.



• Easy Special Attacks at Any Difficulty Setting

Once you've entered all three title-screen codes as explained above, wait for the demo to start and return to the title screen as before. While the words are zooming into the screen, press →←→←+□ on Controller 2; you'll hear "Fantastic!" again and the text will change to yellow. With this code in place, you will be able to choose the "Special" Control Types—A3, A4, etc.—at any difficulty setting, not just "Very Easy" and "Easy".

SATURN



BUG!

• Stage Skip

Bug! is a cool game, but if you don't a Saturn memory cartridge, it can be a drag to have to play through all of the earlier levels over and over, just to reach the area you want to work on. Here's a sneaky code that will allow you to jump to any stage at will; use it to choose your starting stage or warp through the entire game (you cheater, you!) Press **START** at the first title screen to

bring up the words "Start Game" and "Options". Now press **B**, **A**, **B**, **Y**, **Down**, **Right**, **A**, **L**, **Down**. (The **L** represents the button on top of the controller, not **Left** on the D-pad.) You'll hear the Bug yell, "Yike!" to indicate that the cheat is in place. Now start the game. When you want to skip to the next stage, just hold the **L** button at any time and press **Up** on the D-pad. To warp to the previous stage, just hold **L** and press **Down**.

DAYTONA USA

• *Extra Vehicles*

At the title screen, point the D-pad diagonally in the **Up/Left** position and hold the **X**, **Z**, **A** and **B** buttons. With all of these buttons held, press **START**. At the next menu, release all of the buttons and choose Saturn Mode. Now you have eight additional vehicles to choose from, two of which are horses.



• *Hidden Music*

Buried deep within the data of the *Daytona* CD are dozens of songs from Sega games of the past. To hear them, you must earn a score that's high enough to put your initials on the high score table. Once you're there, enter the initials as shown to hear the following tunes:

A.B—Main theme from *After Burner*
KAG—"Maximum Power" from *After Burner*
SAO—"Break Out" from *Alien Storm*
BNB—Theme from *Bonanza Bros.*
YOJ—"BGM A" from *Bonanza Bros.*
YAN—"Filthy" from *Columns*
IGA—"Select" from *Columns 2*
KOS—"King of Speed" from *Daytona USA*
LGA—"Let's Go Away" from *Daytona USA*
SKH—"Sky High" from *Daytona USA*
P.P—"Pounding Pavement" from *Daytona USA*
GLC—"Air Battle" from *G-LOC*
NAG—Opening theme from *G-LOC*
G.F—"Beyond the Galaxy" from *Galaxy Force*
HSB—"Defeat" from *Galaxy Force*
GDA—"Wilderness" from *Golden Axe*
H.O—Main theme from *Hang-On*
K.T—"Advertise" from *Hang-On*
SHO—"Sprinter" from *Super Hang-On*
O.R—"Magical Sound Shower" from *OutRun*
TOR—"Rush A Difficulty" from *Turbo OutRun*
OSI—"Vivacious" from *Turbo OutRun*
ORS—"Adventure" from *OutRunners*
MIT—"Earth Frame G" from *R360*
TRS—"Earth Frame G" from *R360*
KAZ—"BGM 1" from *Scramble Spirits*
SDI—"System Down" from *S.D.I.*
MMM—"Blue Moon" from *S.D.I.*
S.H—Main theme from *Space Harrier*
S.C—"Game Start" from *Stadium Cross*
S.F—Opening theme from *Strike Fighter*
ASA—"Funky Bomb" from *Strike Fighter*
SMG—"Advertise BGM" from *Super Monaco G.P.*
AO.—"Name Entry" from *Super Monaco G.P.*
VMO—Theme from *Sword of Vermilion*
T.B—"Burning Point" from *Thunder Blade*
NAK—"Type 2" from *Thunder Blade*
TAK—"Type 3" from *Super Thunder Blade*
AKJ—"Advertise" from *Virtua Cop*
DEK—"Advertise" from *Virtua Cop*
V.F—"Akira Stage" from *Virtua Fighter*
A.Y—"Akira Stage" from *Virtua Fighter*
J.B—"Jacky Stage" from *Virtua Fighter*
S.B—"Sarah Stage" from *Virtua Fighter*
PAI—"Pai Stage" from *Virtua Fighter*
K.M—"Kage Stage" from *Virtua Fighter*
W.H—"Wolf Stage" from *Virtua Fighter*
J.M—"Jeffry Stage" from *Virtua Fighter*
LAU—"Lau Stage" from *Virtua Fighter*
V.R—"Polygonic Continent" from *Virtua Racing*

PEBBLE BEACH GOLF LINKS

• *Secret Video Menu*

Start a game of *Pebble Beach*, then hold **Right** on the D-pad, also hold the **X** and **Z** buttons and press **RESET** on the Saturn console. After the Saturn logo appears, you'll be sent to a hidden video debug menu that allows you to watch any of the game's full-motion video sequences.

3DO

SPACE PIRATES

• *Secret Scene*

Space Pirates has a cool Easter egg that involves a character from another American Laser Games title. To find it, you must first rescue the commander. After you enter the transporter, choose the TV monitor at the lower-left corner of the screen. When you arrive at that scene, you'll see a cow's skull on the ground. Shoot the skull several times to see a hidden scene with Mad Dog McCree.

SUPER NES

KILLER INSTINCT

• *Boss Code*

First, choose Cinder as your fighter. At the "Vs." screen—the one that shows both characters' portraits just before the fight begins—hold **Right** on the D-pad and quickly press **QUICK PUNCH**, **QUICK KICK**, **FIERCE PUNCH**, **MEDIUM KICK**, **MEDIUM PUNCH** and **FIERCE KICK**. (In the default control configuration, that would be **L**, **R**, **X**, **B**, **Y**, **A**.) You'll hear the announcer say, "Eyedol!" When the fight starts, you'll be playing as the two-headed boss character, Eyedol.

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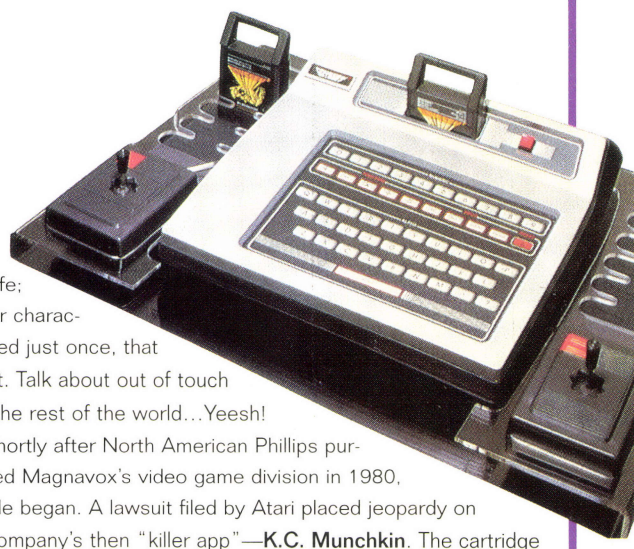
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FLASHBACK

Every month, we step into the Ultimate Gamer Time Machine and relive those early days of gaming. This month, we transport back to 1978 for the debut of a rather unique console: Odyssey².

Death Sentence



If Magnavox was on trial for crimes against gamedom, the charge wouldn't be murder, it would be "assisted suicide". True, Magnavox's Odyssey² video game console had its moments—albeit brief moments—of glory, but eventually it wound up with a terminal illness. Near the end, an almost Kirvorkian-style mercy killing put the console out of its misery. But let's begin at the beginning, shall we?

The year was 1978. Approximately one year had passed since the debut of Atari's VCS console (widely referred to as the 2600). Electronics giant Magnavox had already gotten its feet wet with the original Odyssey programmable game system six years previously (which understandably met with limited success), but this was the company's big chance at going head-to-head with Atari.

The Odyssey² hit store shelves in the Summer of 1978. Market penetration was a big hurdle; the product was strictly carried by select Magnavox retailers such as May Company. At a price tag 50 dollars higher than the VCS, the system could hardly be considered an impulse buy. The unit looked a bit on the goofy side to say the least—almost gaudy in appearance. There were no big-name license draws either. But the Odyssey² had something the Atari 2600 didn't. A keyboard. Magnavox capitalized on this aspect and skewed the advertising campaign accordingly. The monoplanular, touch-sensitive membrane keyboard was certainly an eye-catcher, and sure, it was nice for typing-in your initials, but that concept got old real quick and game players realized the best games were over at the competition. Odyssey²'s big, fat, ugly control boxes were another drawback, and arguably among the worst ever created on the planet—with skinny 8-way control sticks user-friendly only to space aliens from the planet Zorbon. They were hard-wired into the back of the console too (until the late model), so a broken controller meant you had to have the whole system sent away for factory repairs (ridiculous). But most disturbing—in regards to gameplay, at least—was the notorious Odyssey² "one guy" disease. Yup, those back in the day might recall how all Odyssey² games only gave the player one life; if your character died just once, that was it. Talk about out of touch with the rest of the world...Yeesh!

Shortly after North American Phillips purchased Magnavox's video game division in 1980, trouble began. A lawsuit filed by Atari placed jeopardy on the company's then "killer app"—**K.C. Munchkin**. The cartridge was not only an attempt at cashing-in on the **Pac-Man** frenzy, but a blatant rip-off of the maze game, and N.A.P. had no choice but to settle out of court and withdraw the game. Sadly, this was the best Odyssey² would ever have to offer.

The Voice couldn't save them. The innovative **Master Strategy** series couldn't save them. Even **U.F.O.** (which was actually a great game) couldn't save them. In the final analysis, Magnavox may have been adept at cranking out televisions and radios, but the company was simply out of their element in the video game market. And when N.A.P. saw that there was no hope for recovery, the plug was pulled on Odyssey²'s life support.

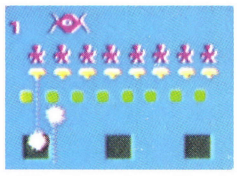
—Jim Loftus

SYSTEM SPECS:

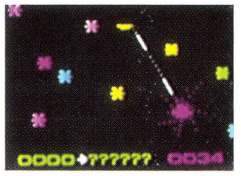
SYSTEM: Odyssey²
MANUFACTURER: Magnavox (later N.A.P.)
RELEASE DATE: 1978
PRICE: $249.95
SPECIFICATIONS: 8-bit processor, 2 Mhz, 16 colors (4 max on-screen), 1 sound channel
ACCESSORIES: The Voice (voice synthesis module used with specially-designed carts)
OTHER NOTES: Odyssey²'s game cartridges came in glossy black, book-style boxes. To our knowledge, this was the first time video-game carts were packaged in this manner (Mattel did it shortly after with its Intellivision games, followed by Emerson's Arcadia and Sega's Master System and Genesis carts). Another interesting item of note was the planned Odyssey³ Super System which was scheduled for release in 1984. While a working prototype was made, the project was D.O.A.—a casualty of the big crash. It's just as well; the O³ merely placed standard O² foreground graphics onto snazzy wallpaper-like backdrops. Yes, it sucked.



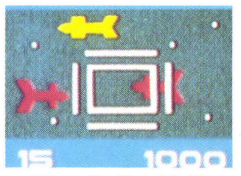
An advertisement for the late K.C. Munchkin.



Alien Invaders Plus!



U.F.O!

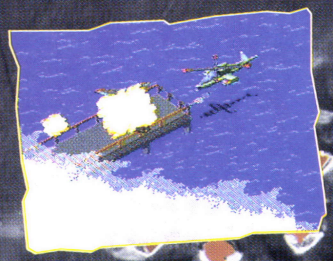


Cosmic Conflict!

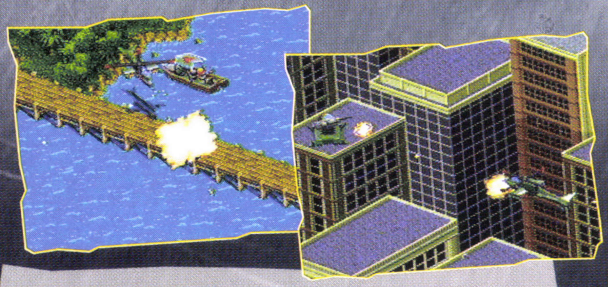


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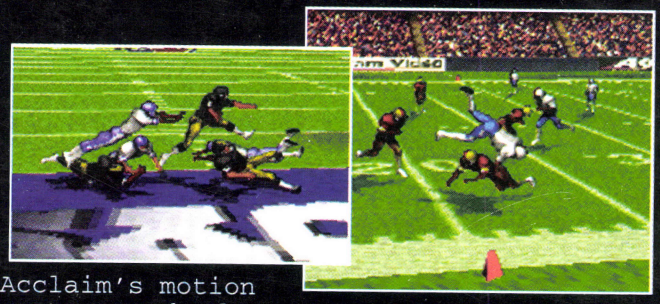


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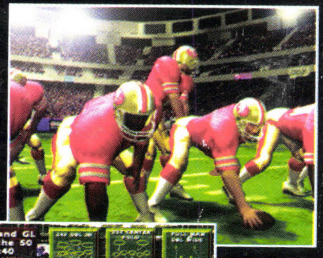


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